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A
SCRIPTURE PLEA

Against a Fatal

RUPTURE,

And Breach of Christian

COMMUNION,

Amongst the Presbyterians in the North of IRELAND.

By JAMES KIRKPATRICK M. A.
Minister of the GOSPEL.

Rom. xv. 7. *Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ
also received us, to the Glory of God.*

Gal. v. 15. *But if ye bite and devour one another,
take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

B E L F A S T :

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PREFACE.

HIS small Treatise, against the Breach of Christian Communion amongst Presbyterians in the North of Ireland, was compos'd, and is now publish'd to the World, upon a very melancholy Occasion. The case is this. On the 23d day of February 1723-24. the Lord's Supper was administred by the Rev'd Mr. Charles Mastertown in his own Congregation in Belfast: My Rev'd Brother Mr. Samuel Haliday and I thought it became us to joyn in Communion with that Congregation, and to exhort our Hearers to do the same. We wrote a joynt Letter to Mr Mastertown on the 19th Day of that Month (a Day observed in his Congregation, as a preparatory Fast before the Communion) signifying our Intention of communicating with 'em, and desiring him to give publick Notice from his Pulpit, that we wou'd give Tokens that Day in our several Meeting-houses to such of our Hearers as intended to partake with them. He gave the publick Notice we desired, and a considerable Number

received Tokens from our Hands. We concluded from this Step, that those who allowed us to give Tokens to others wou'd make no Difficulty of admitting ourselves; and therefore we were exceedingly surpriz'd at the Contents of a Letter wrote us by Mr. Mastertown's Session on the following Saturday, being the 22 of Febr. (which we receiv'd not before Eight a clock that Night) assuring us, that many Members of their Congregation, and many from other Congregations who were to joyn with them, thought they had good Reason not to joyn in Communion with those Ministers, who in their Judgments are against subscribing to the Westminster Confession of Faith as a Test of Orthodoxy, that our communicating wou'd be Matter of Stumbling and Offence to such; and therefore advis'd us not to partake at that time, hoping that our Prudence and Charity wou'd direct us to exercise Forbearance; to which they expected our Answer that Night. Upon Perusal of these Letters (for they sent two Originals exactly the same, one to each of us) our Hearts were fill'd with a deep and sorrowful Sense of the deplorable Consequences, which were but too likely to follow from so manifest a Violation of the Royal Law of Love; we cou'd not but be griev'd to see so many going to the Lord's-table in such an uncharitable Frame, making arbitrary Enclosures about the Table of our common Lord, and turning his instituted Seal of our Unity and Peace into a woful Engine of Division and Discord, and it gave us Pain, to see their Session giving so much Countenance to such a dangerous practical Error, as must effectually destroy the Peace, not of this Church only, but of all Christian Churches, where ever it may happen to prevail; and therefore we cou'd not comply with their Advice; and wrote, that same Evening, a second Letter to Mr. Mastertown, acquainting him with our Resolution to communicate with him and his Congregation next Day, unless his

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Session shou'd apprize us of their positive Resolution to exclude us; to which his Session return'd an Answer next Morning in a second Letter to us; wherein they insist on their first Letter, for the Edification of a great many of their People and those of other Congregations; and were pleas'd to pronounce a heavy and severe Censure upon us, if we shou'd attempt to communicate with them, by calling such an Attempt (in express Words) **AN ATTEMPT TO DISTURB THE SOLEMN WORK THEY WERE TO BE EMPLOYED IN.** This we look'd upon as a positive Exclusion of us from Christian Communion with them at that time; and therefore there was no Room left for any farther Attempt on our part. The Reader will find true Copies of all these Letters, at the Bottom of this and the following Pages, which he is intreated to peruse before he proceed to the Remainder of this Preface.

Some

LETTER I. To the Rev'd Mr. Charles Mastertown in Belfast.

R. D. B. We intend (God willing) to joyn in Communion with you next Lord's Day, in the Participation of the Lord's Supper in your Congregation; that being *one Bread and one Body*, we may not only cherish Brotherly Love, but attain to all the other blessed Ends of that Holy Ordinance: And we don't doubt but divers Members of our Congregations will likewise desire the same Priviledge. And therefore we make it our Desire, that you would please to intimate from your Pulpit the Day, that Tokens will be distributed in our respective Meeting Houses this Day, immediatly after Sermon to such as design to partake with you, which will oblige your affectionate Brethren and Servants.

James Kirkpatrick,

Samuel Holiday.

LETTER

Belfast, February 19. 1723-4.

Some are pleas'd to defend the Conduct of Mr. Mastertown's Session, by alledging, that they did not judi-

LETTER II. To the Rev'd Mr. James Kirkpatrick and Mr. Samuel Haliday.

Belfast, Febr. 22. 1723-4. Rev'd Srs. We of this Session had not Opportunity till now of answering yours of last *Wednesday* directed to our Rev'd Pastor, which was read unto us and relates to your communicating with us next Lord's Day, we hereby acquaint you that it is the Mind of this Session that those of your People that desire to partake with us, and have receiv'd Tokens shall be admitted; but as to your Communicating with us yourselves it is our Humble Advice that you should not Partake with us at this time, and we hope your Prudence and Charity will direct you to exercise Forbearance upon this Occasion, because your Communicating with us, as you proposed in yours, (we are well assur'd) will be matter of Stumbling and Offence not only to many Members of our Congregation, but to many from other Congregations who design to joyn in Communion with us on this Occasion, who think that they have good reason not to joyn in Communion with these Ministers who in their Judgments are against Subscribing to the *Westminster Confession* of Faith as a Test of Orthodoxy. This is written by the Appointment of the Session of the third Congregation of *Belfast*, and subscribed in their Names by SAMUEL CHALMERS Sess. Clerk.

☞ your Answer is expected this Night.

LETTER III. *Belfast, Febr. 22d. 1723-4.* R. D. B. The Letters of your Session to us (which we received about an Hour ago) were very surprizing. Their Advice that we should not partake of the Lord's Supper in your Congregation is not supported by any convincing Reasons. We hope that the Number of those, who they seem to think would be Stumbled at our Communicating with you has been greatly magnified: but were it as great as they imagine, it does not appear to us warrantable in your Session to exclude those whom by the Laws of the Gospel they are bound to receive in order to gratify the Humour of those, who thro' a very dangerous Mistake are for renting the

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judicially Exclude us from Communion, but only advise us, for that time, to forbear it for the Reasons

the Mystical Body of Christ, we think ourselves entitled to Communion with you not only by the Gospel Charter, but also by the Rules of our Ecclesiastical Assemblies: We know no Church which has made Subscription to the *Westminster Confession* of Faith (far less being in Judgment for the Imposition of it as a Test of Orthodoxy) a Term of Christian Fellowship in the Lord's Supper. And we therefore hope that your Session will not do it, nor call in Question our Right to communicate when we are allowed to give Tokens to others. Having advised our Hearers to embrace this Opportunity of testifying their Charity to your Congregation, and their Readiness to hold Communion with all who in every place call on the Lord Jesus; it might be matter of Offence, if we ourselves shou'd abstain from the Performance of that Duty, in which, and in every other good Work we ought to be Examples to the Flock. We also hope that our joyning together in Communion will (by the Blessing of God) have an happy Tendency to allay the present Animosities.

But tho' for these Reasons we demand it as our Right to be admitted; yet if your Session signify to us by a Line this Night that they are determined to exclude us, in that case we will desist at this time (and in that case only) and then the Blame will not be chargeable on us. Your Answer this Night will determine our Conduct to Morrow: May the Lord direct you and them, and grant you his gracious Presence. We are your affectionate Brethren and Servants

To the Rev'd Mr. *Charles Mastertown.*

*James Kirkpatrick.
Samuel Haliday.*

LETTER IV. To the Rev'd Mr. *James Kirkpatrick* and Mr. *Samuel Haliday.*

Belfast. Febr. 23. 1723-4. Rev'd Sirs, In Answer to yours at 10 last Night, we are still of the same Opinion with our first Letter and do **INSIST** upon it, and intreat your Forbearance for this time, as you value the Edification of a great many of our People and those from other Congregations, hoping you will not attempt to disturb such a solemn

Work

sons contain'd in their Letters. To this I ANSWER, that my Brother Haliday and I did understand their first Letter as capable of that construction, and therefore in our second Letter to Mr. M-n, argued against it only as against a bad Advice which we had no clearness to comply with; but their second Letter cannot admit of that Interpretation, without offering manifest violence to their words, and without supposing them to have given an Answer which was nothing to the purpose. For, they pass a censure on us, if we shou'd attempt to Communicate with 'em, by calling it an attempt to disturb the solemn Work they were to be employed in. And cou'd they have said more against any whom they debarred from the Lord's-table? shou'd any Man, whom we warn not to approach to that sacred Ordinance, because of his known scandalous Life, attempt to do it, we wou'd charge him with disturbing that solemn Work, and they have us'd the very same Terms in our case. Besides, when we had desired them plainly to tell us, whether they wou'd positively exclude us or no, & assur'd them that nothing but an exclusion plainly signified to us wou'd keep us away, they ought to have frankly told us their Mind; and if they design'd no more than an Advice, they ought to have declar'd that tho' they judg'd it most Expedient that we shou'd forbear Voluntarily, yet they cou'd not in Conscience Debar us; and therefore, if we wou'd not
take

Work as we are now to be employed in. This is written by the Appointment of the Session of the third Congregation of Belfast, and subscribed in their Names by

SAMUEL CHALMERS
Session Clerk.

take their Advice, they wou'd not pretend to hinder us. But instead of dealing candidly by us, they write a Letter, which, compar'd with ours to which it was a profess'd Answer, was express'd in Terms that we cou'd not but look upon as a plain Exclusion. Had they not judg'd it a great fault in us to approach to the Lord's-table, wou'd they have call'd it an attempt to disturb that solemn Work ? and can any Disciple of Christ, who has a real title to Communion, both in the Judgment of Christ and in foro Ecclesiæ (i.e. by the Rules according to which the Church ought to judge of any Man's title to communion) be guilty of disturbing the Work of the Lord, by his using the Right Christ has given him, and by his obeying the command of his Lord and Master ? surely he cannot. For to disturb the Lord's Work, is a Sin ; and to obey Christ, is our unquestionable Duty : It was reasonable then for us to conclude, that those who told us plainly that our coming to the Lord's-supper wou'd be a disturbing of that solemn Work, must believe that we had no Right to approach to that blessed Ordinance ; and therefore that their meaning was, that they wou'd not allow us to do it ; which is as plain an Exclusion as the Church can pass in any Case. And we cou'd not suppose 'em to mean otherwise, without supposing 'em to trifle or deal uncandidly with us, or that they did not understand the Terms of their own Letter.

But this defence cannot be made for many Members of their Congregation and of other Congregations, whom their Letters plainly acknowledge to have broke Christian-communication with the Non-subscribers ; and, supposing it to have been in the Session, no more than an Advice, it will not justify their Conduct, if I prove the Advice to have been bad and ill Grounded ; This has determin'd the Scheme I have pursu'd in the following Sheets. For I consider two Questions, first, whe-

whether the Non-subscribing Principle as held by us be a sufficient cause for our being denied the privileges of Christian-communion? this Question I resolve in the Negative, which I prove by Arguments in my first Chapter, and vindicate from Objections made against it, in my second Chapter. The second Question I handle, is concerning the Lawfulness of a voluntary Abstaining from Communion in either of the Parties, Subscribers or Non-subscribers, in such as have no Scruples themselves, and yet do it, and Advise others to do it for fear of Offence, and for promoting Edification in others; where I show the Mischief of such Voluntary Non-communion, and of all Advices to that purpose.

Some, who are asham'd to undertake the defence of the Conduct either of the Session, or the scrupulous Members who have broke Communion with us, do palliate and extenuate the Fault of both, by charging my Rev'd Brother Haliday and me with a Captious design of demanding Communion with them, as if we had foreseen what happen'd, and intended it only to blacken and render our Neighbours Odious for refusing it; and that we made and insisted on the Proposal, not so much from a desire to be admitted, as from a design to lead them into a snare for rejecting us. I heartily pity those Gentlemen, who are driven to such poor shifts to excuse their Friends. What Right have they to sit in Judgment upon our Hearts, and to pass a sentence upon these secrets which are reserved to the Judgment of the great day? Have we not expressly declared the contrary in our Letters? wherein we profess'd a design, by our being one Bread and one Body, of cherishing Brotherly Love, and of attaining to all the other Ends of that blessed Ordinance, and that our joint Communion might have an happy Influence for allaying the present Animosities.

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These Gentlemen wou'd do more service both to Religion and to their own Characters, if, instead of arraigning our sincerity, they wou'd endeavour to Convince their Friends of their mistake, and teach 'em better Principles and more Charity.

I heartily and sincerely forgive those who have injuriously denied me the Priviledges of Christian-communion with 'em, and who have done all that is in their Power to blast my Ministry in a place where I have exercis'd it these seventeen Years. I think myself oblig'd in Conscience to detect their dangerous Error; and therefore, in the Spirit of meekness, I do here publicly and solemnly call upon them, and upon all who give into their measures, to peruse seriously this *SCRIPTURE-PLEA*; and that no prejudices against the Author and the Cause I maintain shou'd hinder them from giving it a fair Hearing, as they wou'd approve themselves to GOD, at the great day, to be men of sincerity and Impartiality, who ought not to confine their reading to one side of a Question, and neglect what is offered on the other. I write, to convince, and not to offend 'em; and therefore, when I charge absurd Consequences upon their narrow Principles (as all fair disputants must do against those with whom they have any Controversy) I do not intend to insinuate, that they see and maintain these Consequences: Nay, I believe they sincerely Abhor 'em, as much as I do.

Another Reason that renders this Publication Necessary, is, the care which I'm oblig'd to take of the Souls under my Charge, into whose hands I put this little Essay, as an Antidote against the growth of that Schism which took its first Rise in this place. And I hope that all my Rev'd Fathers and Brethren, and all their Congregations will remember that they kept a publick Fast in November last to bewail our Divisions

visions ; and that they can't but look upon this breach of Christian-communion, against which I Argue, as one of the bitterest Fruits of 'em ; and will not stand by as unconcern'd Spectators, but exert themselves to the utmost of their Power, for healing this dismal Breach ; which, all wise and moderate Men foresee, will (if it go's on) most effectually expose the Interest of Non-conformity to the Scorn and Derision of those who are watching for our Halting, and who stand behind the Curtain, blowing the Coal, hoping to see both Parties perish in the Flames of their unchristian Contentions. If our Synods are composed of Members, who have not Charity enough to sit with one another at the Lord's Table, how can it be expected, that either they shou'd cordially unite their Councils in promoting the Kingdom of our dear Redeemer, or that God shou'd bless their Consultations, or honour their Assemblies with his gracious Presence ? In order to restore their Peace and Comfort, and to preserve the Union of our Synodical Association, which too many are now attempting to breake, I have publish'd this Scripture-Plea against a Breach of Christian Communion amongst us ; earnestly wishing that this poor Essay may, by the Blessing of God, be a Means of encreasing the Brotherly Love of both Subscribers and Non-subscribers towards one another ; and of convincing those, who have broke our Communion and Peace, of the Error of their Way.



CHAP



CH A P. I.

Scripture Arguments demonstrating the Right of Non-Subscribers to Fellowship with their Christian Brethren in the Lord's-Supper, to which is prefixt the State of the Question.

FOR Stating the Question to be debated in these Sheets, 'tis necessary to acquaint the Reader, that in a General Synod of Presbyterian Ministers and Elders met in *Belfast*, in June 1721. A Motion was made, *that all the Members of the Synod who were willing to Subscribe the Westminster-Confession of Faith, according to the Terms of the pacific Act might be allowed by the Synod to do it.* This occasion'd a long and warm Debate; one Party mov'd for the Adjournment of the Debate, and the other insisted on putting the Question on the Motion. The Majority resolv'd to Adjourn the debate, put and carried the main Question in the Affirmative; and in pursuance of that Resolution Subscrib'd this Formula: Reserving to ourselves the Benefit of the pacific Act, we do believe the *Westminster-Confession of Faith* to be founded on the Word of God; and therefore as such by this our Subscription we own the said Confession to be the Confessi-

“ on of our Faith.” Divers Ministers did neither then nor since make the voluntary Subscription to which that Resolution refers ; who are therefore commonly call’d *Non-subscribers* ; and those who Subscrib’d are *Term’d Subscribers* whether it was expedient to make or to decline that voluntary Subscription, is not the present Question.

A L L the Non-Subscribers maintain, that tho’ by the Laws of Jesus Christ, Ministers ought not to Ordain any Man to the Office of the Holy Ministry, of whose soundness in the Faith they have not Satisfactory Evidence, nor the Church to receive such an one ; yet that Christ hath not Empower’d his Church to Judge that Subscription to the *Westminster-Confession* is the **O N L Y** Satisfactory evidence of a Man’s Soundness in the Faith ; and to exclude one from the Ministry who is ready and willing to give Satisfactory Evidence of it another Way, *meerly* for his not Subscribing the *Westminster-Confession*. Whether this Principle of theirs be just and True is not the present Question. Neither shall I debate in this Paper, whether this Principle will justify any Man in his forsaking the Ministry of those who hold it.

B U T the true State of the Question is to be fixt from a Paragraph of a Letter of Mr. Master town’s Session to Mr. Haliday and me, which I have Transcrib’d in the Preface. In that Letter they say, “ Your communicating with us as you propose’d in yours (we are well assur’d) will be a matter of Stumbling and Offence, not only to M A N Y Members of our Congregation, but to many from other Congregations, who design to joyn in Communion with us on this occasion ;



“ occasion ; who think, that they have good Reason not to joyn in Communion with those Ministers, who in their Judgments are against Subscribing to the *Westminster-Confession* of Faith as a Test of Orthodoxy.” The debate lies between me and them and with all who are of their Sentiments, who think *they have good reason not to joyn in Communion* (in the Lord’s-Supper, for that was what we were demanding) *with these Ministers, who in their Judgments are against Subscribing, &c.* By our being in Judgment against Subscribing the *Westminster-Confession* as a Test of Orthodoxy, they must mean, that we are in Judgment against the exclusion of a Candidate, who has a Regular call to the Ministry, offers a Satisfactory evidence of his Orthodoxy, and has all the Gospel-Qualifications of a Faithful Pastor, meerly for his not Subscribing the *Westminster-Confession* ; and that we ourselves wou’d not Subscribe it, if it were impos’d on us as a Test of Orthodoxy. The true State of the Question is this, *whether the Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland have good reason not to joyn in Communion in the Lord’s-Supper with those Ministers who are in their Judgments against Subscribing the Westminster-Confession as a Test of Orthodoxy, meerly for their holding that Principle and for no other Cause?* Of this Question the Affirmative is maintain’d by those with whom I have this Controversy ; and the Negative by me : In proof of it, I humbly offer these Arguments,

A R G U M E N T I.

NO Christian ought to be excluded from the Lord’s-Supper *meerly* for his holding a Principle which

which do's not render him incapable of any one of the ends of that Holy Ordinance, and which do's not prove him to want some necessary Qualification requir'd by the Laws of the Gospel in worthy Communicants.

BUT the Principle of the Non-Subscribing Ministers renders none of 'em incapable of any one end of the Lord's-Supper, and is no proof of their want of any one Qualification made necessary by the Gospel in worthy Communicants; **THEREFORE** they ought not to be excluded from Communion *merely* for their holding that Principle.

NO possible Answer can be made to this Argument but by denying either *one* or *both* of the Premisses; and therefore I shall prove them both. The first Proposition is prov'd from this certain Principle, that a Christian who is Capable of all the ends of the Lord's-Supper, and who has all the necessary Qualifications requir'd by the Laws of the Gospel in worthy Communicants, ought not for *any* Cause or upon *any* pretence whatsoever to be excluded from it, and therefore not for his holding a Principle which is consistent with it's Gospel ends and Conditions. The Truth of this Principle will appear from the manifest and Gross Absurdities which must follow upon the denial of it: To set them in a clear Light, let us briefly consider the Gospel ends of the Lord's-Supper, and the Gospel-Qualifications of worthy Communicants.

THE ends design'd by our Blessed Redeemer in the Institution of His Supper, were these: To be a Perpetual Memorial of his Death and Sufferings; to be an open and Solemn Profession of the Christian Religion; to be a visible Seal of the

the New Covenant, wherein His Disciples do repeat their Baptismal vows, and have a repeated Sealing evidence of the Remission of all their Sins, and of all the other Blessings of the Everlasting Covenant; and, lastly, to be a Solemn visible Badge and Seal of the Union and Communion of all the Members of Christ's Mystical Body, who *being many are one Bread, and one Body: For they are all Partakers of that one Bread.*

THE Qualifications the Gospel requires in all worthy Communicants, are these: Knowledge to *discern the Lord's Body*. Faith, Repentance, an Ardent Love to God, a most sincere Love of our Blessed Saviour, fervent Charity to all who bear his Image and are his Disciples, an Universal Love of our Neighbours, a Christian Spirit of Forgiveness, an Holy Life, Actual and Explicit Covenanting with God in and thorough the Mediator Jesus Christ by the Gracious assistance of his Eternal Spirit; together with necessary Self-Examination, fervent Prayer, and such Pious devout Meditations as are suitable to the Nature and design of that Sacred Gospel-Feast.

THE Minister who is capable of answering *all these* Ends, and who has *all these* Qualifications, must not only be a Truly sincere Christian, and a Man of a Regular Conversation, but in a good Religious Frame for this solemn Ordinance; entitled to the Favour of God and the Remission of all his Sins, an Heir of Glory; and, in a Word, a Man to whom all the Promises of the Gospel and all the Blessings of the New Covenant do truly belong: If such a Man may be excluded from the Lord's-Supper, I wou'd fain know by what Rule any Christian shall be able to know

know whether he himself be entitled to Communion, or which of his fellow Christians are entitled to Communion with him; which are Points of great Importance for directing our Christian Practice; and therefore that principle which shakes and unsettles the Faith and Comfort of Christians in these matters must be a dangerous Mistake. If a Minister or any other Christian, to whom the Character I have been describing do's belong, may be for any Cause or any Pretence whatsoever excluded from the Lord's-supper, then these Two manifest absurdities will undoubtedly follow.

FIRST, It will follow, that Christians may exclude from their Communion those Ministers whom the FATHER SON and Holy GHOST (in whose sacred Name they were Baptiz'd) do graciously receive into a most intimate Communion upon Earth, and will bless with an Everlasting Glorious Communion in the Joys of Heaven; whose Iniquities are all Pardon'd, who are Justified by Faith in the Blood of Christ; who are partakers of the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they become the Sons of GOD; and if *Sons then Heirs, Heirs of GOD and joint-heirs with Christ*; who are more than conquerors thro' him that hath loved them, and wash'd them from their Sins in his own Blood, and made them Kings and Priests unto GOD and his Father; to whom belong the inestimable Blessings of the Love of GOD, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost; with whom the great Jehovah hath made an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which is all their Salvation and all their Desire; who are all Baptized by one spirit into one Body; whose

Cause for Non-communication.

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whose are all things, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,, or the world, or Life, or Death, or Things present, or Things to come, all are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is GOD's.

I am persuaded, no Minister or Christian whatsoever, is capable of all the instituted Ends of the Holy Communion, or qualified to be a worthy Communicant, of whom all these Glorious things I have now mentioned may not be truly said, tho' perhaps he may not always enjoy the comfortable Sense of these Heavenly Priviledges: And therefore it well becomes Christians to consider seriously how they will Answer it to GOD and their own Consciences, shou'd they dare to exclude any one of them from their Communion. I beg that, for their own sakes, they may put the following Questions to their own Hearts, and think of such deliberate and solid Answers to them as may stand the Test of Christ's righteous Judgment at the Great Day. "Are not these Ministers whom I am excluding from the Lord's-supper, entitled by the Gospel-charter to all the Blessings represented sealed & applied to worthy Communicants? are not they qualified for all the Spiritual Devotion & Services incumbent on the worthy Partakers of the Lord's-table? Did not our Blessed Saviour institute his Supper for the Benefit of such qualified and worthy Communicants? Has he not Invited and Commanded every one of them to Partake, and said to them all, *do this in Remembrance of me?* with what Justice can I imagine, that Christ should give a Right to these Ministers to Communicate, and a directly opposite Right to their Fellow-christians, that is, a Right to their
"Fellow-

“ Fellow-servants to hinder them from doing
 “ what their Great Lord and Master hath
 “ Commanded them to do? or, that he shou’d
 “ convey to me an Arbitrary Power of denying
 “ the External Token and Seal of Communion
 “ to those whom he hath made Candidates of
 “ a Crown of Glory, and partakers of a Divine
 “ Nature?

If these Ministers in holding, and acting in
 pursuance of their Principle, have sinned against
 GOD; we must at the same time suppose that
 this Sin is a Sin of Infirmity and Ignorance;
 and seeing it is consistent with their sincere Piety
 and their being Justified by Faith, we must be-
 lieve that that very Sin of theirs is actually Par-
 don’d by our Gracious GOD; and why shou’d
 any Man pretend to exclude them from Commu-
 nion, for a Sin of Infirmity, actually Pardoned
 by him who died for the Remission of Sins? Let
 any Man show, if he can, why those very terms up-
 on which an Holy GOD do’s pardon our Sins,
 are not sufficient to induce sinful Creatures to
 let us joyn with them in the *sacramental Seal* of
 that Royal Pardon which the King of Saints
 hath Ratified and Confirmed under the great
 Seal of Heaven?

Secondly, If those Ministers I have been de-
 scribing may be lawfully Excluded, it will fol-
 low, that the Rules given us by the Inspired
 Apostle, in the 14th. and 15th. Chapters of
 his Epistle to the *Romans* (concerning the Mu-
 tual Christian Communion of the Jewish and
 Gentile Converts with one another) are Imprac-
 ticable and Useless; and that the Reasons by
 which he supports ’em are not conclusive: Both
 which Consequences are very Absurd; and there-

therefore that exclusive narrow Principle from which they follow must be so too.

The Gentile Christians being instructed in the Nature of Christian Liberty, and seeing that the Ceremonial Law was abolish'd, did not observe its Rites and Usages; they were the *strong*, and the Jewish Christians were so *weak* as to believe the Ceremonial Law to be still Obligatory. These Parties Quarrel'd with one another; the *strong* despis'd the *weak*, and the *weak* judg'd the *strong*: and Matters were carried so high on both Sides, that they were just on the point of a fatal Rupture, and ready to exclude one another from Christian Communion in the Lord's-supper. The Apostle interposeth, with Directions for preventing that dismal Breach their unchristian Animosities were leading 'em to; addressing himself sometimes to the one Party, sometimes to the other, and sometimes to both Jointly: The *strong* are enjoin'd (Chap. xiv. 1.) To receive him that is weak in the Faith, but not to doubtful Disputations, and (Chap. xv. 1.) To bear the infirmities of the Weak, and not to please themselves, and are forbid (Chap. 14.3.) to despise the weak; and the weak (*ibid.*) are caution'd against judging the strong. The same directions are given to both Parties, who are mutually enjoyn'd to receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God, (Chap. xv. 7.) and mutually discharg'd from judging one another any more, and from setting at naught their Brethren (Chap. xiv. 10, 13.); which must concern them both, because they were equally Brethren, and equally the Servants of another Master. The evident meaning of these Precepts is this; that neither Party shou'd fix any brand of Infamy nor mark of Reproach upon the

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other, that neither Party shou'd rashly and uncharitably Censure the other, as if they were not their Christian Brethren nor Servants of their common Lord ; that they shou'd not sit in Judgment upon one another's Consciences ; and that they ought cheerfully and frankly to Receive one another into Christian-communion, notwithstanding of the remaining Difference in Judgment and Practice amongst 'em about the Points in Debate.

These Inspired Precepts, consider'd in this Light, are of great Use to the Church in all Ages, for restraining them from a Breach of Communion upon any Difference in Judgment and Practice that will not warrant it, and for settling the just Extent of that truly Catholick and Christian Communion, which the Gospel so warmly recommends. But how shall they be Applied, so as to be subservient to these noble Gospel-Ends ? Surely, they will be of very little Use, if Christians may refuse Communion to those Ministers of the Gospel who are Capable of all the Ends of the Sacrament, and who have all the Gospel-Qualifications of worthy Communicants. For if we enquire into the Reasons why the Apostle requires the contending Parties to hold mutual Communion with one another, we will find the Substance of them reducible to this one general Head, *viz.* because each Party was capable of all the Ends of the Sacrament, and had all the Gospel-Qualifications of worthy Communicants ; and that there was so much credible Evidence of this, as made it highly Criminal in either Party to judge otherwise of their Brethren, and

and that such a Judgment was proper only for Christ to make, who will judge of the Sincerity or Insincerity of all Men's Hearts at the Great Day. If this be the Reason given by the Inspired Apostle (as I shall presently prove it was) for the joynt Christian Communion of the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Converts ; then certainly these Precepts must be extended to all Cases where the very same Reason is to be assign'd, or else those Precepts will be useless for the Ends for which they were given, and the Reasons assigned for them will not be Conclusive ; because if they are conclusive in any one Case, they would be uniformly and equally Conclusive in every Case where they are equally strong. If the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Christians were to Partake together of the Lord's Supper; because both of them (notwithstanding of their Difference of Sentiments) were capable of all the Ends of it, and had all the Qualifications of worthy Communicants, then why should not Christians now receive to their Communion all their Brethren who are capable and qualified in the same Manner ? And if that be not a good Reason for mutual Communion amongst Christians now, why did the Inspired Apostle judge it a good Reason for the mutual Communion of the Believing *Romans* and all other Christians in the first Age of Christianity, when it was in its greatest Purity ?

Now that I have given a just Account of the Apostle's Reasons for the joint Christian Communion of these contending Parties, will be plain to any one who will impartially consider

sider them, as they occur in these Chapters to which I refer. The Reasons there assigned, are ; because God *hath received* both Parties into Favour and Communion with himself ; our Lord Jesus Christ hath vouchsafed to *receive* them to be Members of his Body, and entitled them to all the Priviledges of his Disciples ; they are the sincere *Servants* of our Lord Jesus Christ ; they *shall be holden up*, countenanc'd and graciously supported by the Almighty Power of God ; they were all truly Christian *Brethren* in Christ, and therefore must be, all of them, Sons of God, by a Spiritual Regeneration ; they were capable of Glorifying God, in the Lord's Supper ; for they were commanded *to receive one another, as Christ hath receiv'd us, to the Glory of God* ; they were *acceptable to God, and approved of Men*, because they sincerely *serv'd Christ* in those great and Essential Things, wherein *the Kingdom of God consists, viz. Righteousness, and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost*. And, as to the Points in Debate, they were not Essential to Christianity nor absolutely necessary to entitle a Man to the Favour of God, the Hope of Eternal Life nor to Communion with Christ or his Church. The Kingdom of God did not consist in them even *those who held the wrong side of the Question* were conscientious good Men ; *those who regarded the Day, regarded it to the Lord* ; and *those who from a Scrupulous and Erring Conscience did not Eat, to the Lord did not Eat, and gave God Thanks* ; agreeing with their Brethren in all the Substantial Duties of Christian Piety and Worship, and therefore the several distinguishing Opinions and Practices of the Respective

pective Parties, being Matters wherein sincere Christians were of different Sentiments, must be regarded by one another as Matters of *Doubtful Disputation*, not to be imposed as *necessary Terms* of Christian Communion; the Reader will find all these Reasons in *Rom. XIV.* 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 17, 18. and *XV.* 7.

Now will any Man pretend, that a true Child of God, received into the Favour and Communion of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, supported and countenanced by Heaven, truly acceptable to God, exercising himself faithfully in the Service of Christ in a practical Obedience to all the Essential Precepts of Christianity, and fit for Glorifying God in the Lord's Supper (which he cannot be, unless he can answer all its Ends, and have all the Gospel-Qualifications of a worthy Communicant;) will any Man, I say, pretend that a Christian of this Character is not capable of all the Ends of the Lord's Supper, and is not truly qualified to be a worthy Communicant? And if he be *so* capable and *so* qualified, and if this Character of his which proves him to be so, be the very Reason assigned by the Apostle why each Party should receive him to Communion; then, I think, it is fairly and fully prov'd, that *St. Paul's* Reasons for the joint Communion of the Contending Parties are, for Substance reducible to this one General, *viz.* that both Parties were capable of all the Ends of the holy Communion, and duly Qualifi'd, according to the Gospel for it. Would Christians abide by this stable Principle, which I have now shown to have the Force of an Apostolical Canon, and uniformly pursue

pursue it in all their Debates about Christian Communion, no unqualified Person (so far as the Church who can't see the Hearts of Men, can Prevent it) wou'd be admitted to Communion, and none wou'd be rejected but those whom Christ hath rejected : Communion wou'd neither be too narrow nor too large ; all Extremes wou'd be avoided, and all the qualified Disciples of Christ wou'd as truly be *one Bread* as they are really *one Body*. But if once we depart from this Principle, no Check can be given, no Limits can be set, to the most Exorbitant Power that can be claim'd in the Christian Church ; for if Men will once pretend to an Authority to reject from their Communion, those whom Christ hath received, and qualified both for Communion with himself and with the Church, (when they know them to be so qualified,) for any Principle or Fault, which the Rejecters own and believe to be consistent with their being capable of, and qualified for Communion, where will they stop I am next to prove !

The *Second Proposition* of my Argument, viz. *the Principle held by the Non-subscribing Ministers, (namely, that they are in their Judgments against Subscribing the Westminster Confession of Faith as a Test of Orthodoxy) renders none of them incapable of any one End of the Lord's Supper instituted by Christ ; and is no Proof of their want of any one Qualification, made necessary by the Gospel, in a worthy Communicant : Which I prove thus.*

That Principle either in a Minister or private Christian, which must prove him that holds it incapable of any of the instituted
Ends

Ends of the Lord's Supper, or that he wants any one Gospel-Qualification of a worthy Communicant, must necessarily have one of these three Properties, *i. e.* it must be either, *First*, a Fundamental Error inconsistent with sincere Religion and true Godliness; or, *Secondly*, It must be such an Error as destroys some one End of the Lord's Supper, or some one Qualification of a worthy Communicant, or some Divine Institution made necessary by the Gospel-Law to the worthy Receivers; or, *Thirdly*, that the Acknowledgment of the Principle be required of Christians by the Minister who holds it, and demands Communion with them upon these Terms.

But the Principle of the Non-subscribers above recited hath none of these Properties; therefore &c.

The *First* Proposition is selfevident; the second I prove in all its Parts. And, *First*, That the principle of Non-subscribers is not a Fundamental Error, inconsistent with sincere Religion and true Godliness. I hope none of the Christian People I am Arguing against will maintain it to be a fundamental and damnable Error inconsistent with serious Piety, but lest they shou'd be tempted to follow the footsteps of those who have been under the Dominion of an imposing Spirit, I think it necessary to say something on this Head by way of Prevention. It is observable that the weak Jewish Converts, who thought the Law of *Moses* Obligatory on them, even after the Death and Resurrection of our Saviour, did at first express no more than a Zeal for the Observation of it in themselves; and while they stopt there, the Apostle

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Paul made great Condescensions to them, to prevent their Offence; but they soon went a step farther; and insisted on the Imposition of it on the Gentile Christians; as a Term of their Religious Communion with them: And then all the Apostles remonstrated in the strongest Terms against it, and St. Paul wou'd not give place by Subjection (to their Demands) no not for an hour: And some of them went yet a step higher, and made it a Fundamental, teaching that Circumcision was necessary to Salvation; and that Christians were to be justified before GOD by the Law of Moses; then the Apostle treated their Doctrine with Abhorrence, informing them of their Danger, and assuring them that if they were Circumcised, Christ shou'd profit them nothing. A misguided Zeal is very prone to the Imposition of a favourite Notion upon others, and very apt to conclude that Christ will shut the Gates of Heaven on those on whom men have (justly, as they think) shut the Gates of the Church; and therefore to prevent the like dangerous Mistake amongst those who have already treated the Non-subscribers much worse than they deserve; I beg leave to suggest to them, that if at any time they shall believe the Non-subscribing Principle to be a Fundamental Error they will be obliged to acknowledge that this proposition which is directly contradictory to it is a Fundamental Truth, viz. That all Intrants into the Ministry amongst us ought to Subscribe the Westminster-confession of Faith as the Sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, i. e. they ought not to be Licens'd or Ordain'd, except they do Subscribe it as such; and if this be a Fundamental, then we have got a NEW FUNDAMENTAL into our Religion, which was

no Fundamental for fifteen Hundred Years and more after the Christian Faith was fully Revealed and Recorded in the sacred Writings; and was never found out amongst us in the North of Ireland until the Year 1705, nor in Scotland before the Year 1690, or thereabouts, nor in any other Church in the World that I know of either before or since: Then the Holy Scriptures cease to be the perfect Rule of Faith, because Defective in this NEW Fundamental; Nay we have not only got a New Fundamental, (according to the Supposition I am refuting) but an Article to be a Fundamental, which was not so much as true for fifteen Hundred Years after the compleat Scheme of Christianity was delivered to the World by the Inspired Teachers of it: For before the *Westminster-confession* of Faith was Compos'd (which was not done till the Year 1647) it was impossible for any Man to Subscribe it, either as an Exclusive Test of Orthodoxy or under any other reduplication; and therefore I hope, it will be granted me, that it was no Man's Duty to Subscribe it before it was made, and that the Church had no Power all that while, to exclude a Man from the Ministry for his not doing an impossible thing. If I rightly understand what the Apostle *Paul* says (Gal. i. 8, 9.) the making of new FUNDAMENTALS is the making of another Gospel. Every Fundamental Principle is essential to the Gospel; and therefore the addition of a new Fundamental to the Gospel must give it another and a new Essence; and what gives it another Essence must make it another Gospel; because it shew's a new way to Heaven and a new condition of Salvation, to which the Gospel is an utter Stran-

ger. The Apostle looks upon this to be such a dangerous Error, as to pronounce any one that shou'd be Guilty of it, were he *an Angel from Heaven*, to be *Accursed*; which should make all Christians to Abhor it, and tremble at the Thoughts of it. Besides, I leave it to the cool Thoughts of all sober Christians to Judge, whether it wou'd be agreeable to Christianity, to pronounce all Non-subscribers to be in a state of Damnation, to Judge them to be no Christians, to be void of the fear of GOD, and to be utterly destitute of all saving Grace; that they are Unregenerated, that they have neither Faith nor Repentance nor the Love of GOD; that they have not the Spirit of Christ, and that the Spirit of GOD is confin'd to the Subscribers; that the Non-subscribers are yet *dead in their Sins and Trespasses* and under the curse & wrath of God, and must Perish everlastingly unless they explicitly Repent of and revoke their (supposed) wicked Error. I Scruple not to say, as Mr. Baxter says in another Case, that this wou'd be *the Soul of Popish Wickedness*: And yet the absurd principle, which makes the Non-subscribing principle a Fundamental Error, must Natively infer all this.

Secondly, THE above recited Principle of the Non-subscribers, against Subscribing the *Westminster-confession* as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, does not deny or destroy any one End of the Lord's-supper or any one Gospel-Qualification of a worthy Communicant, or any one Divine Institution made Necessary by the Gospel-law to the worthy Receivers: The truth whereof is evident from this consideration, that those who hold that Principle do likewise hold all these

these Ends and Qualifications, which were designed by Christ in the institution of the Sacrament, and made necessary to the Communicants: And I defy all my Adversaries to name more than what I have acknowledged in this Paper; or to name me one Divine Institution, Necessary to Worthy Communicating which I and all my Reverend Non-subscribing Brethren do not expressly Maintain and Profess. We both Administer and Receive the Lord's-supper exactly according to Christ's Institution, without diminishing any thing from the first Purity, in which our Saviour gave and received it, and without the least Addition of any human Invention to it. Our Principle against Subscribing the *Westminster-confession* as a Test of Orthodoxy, for which we have been Excluded the Communion of the Faithful, gives us a full Liberty of professing every Truth which is in the said Confession, and many more which are not therein contained, as every Body that has the least Acquaintance with the State of that Controversy cannot but know; and therefore from the Nature of the Thing, it is impossible that the Non-subscribing Principle can imply a Denial of any of the Ends of the Sacrament, or of the Necessary conditions in worthy Receivers, or any Divine Institution that is Necessary to them, or that the holding of that Principle shou'd make the Communicants guilty of the *Body and Blood of Christ*, and infer their *Eating and Drinking Judgment to themselves*.

Thirdly, THE Non-subscribers do not demand Communion with the Subscribers upon the hard Terms of making the Subscribers renounce their own Principle, and so become Non-subscribers

bers; nothing in that Principle or any other they hold, does lead them to it; but on the contrary they hold a Principle directly against it, acknowledging that the Subscribers are as truly capable, as themselves of all the Ends of the Sacrament, and of all Gospel-qualifications for it; and therefore that no such Principle as *that* should be the exclusive Term of their Communion with the Non-subscribers. And thus having finished my first Argument, I come to

A R G U M E N T II.

The Principle of some Ministers, who are in their Judgments against subscribing the *Westminster-confession* as a Test of Orthodoxy, is neither condemned in the Gospel, in exprefs Terms, under the penalty of Exclusion from the Lord's-supper, nor reducible by any fair Consequence to any of those Sins, which are there condemned under that Penalty; and therefore 'tis unlawful to deprive any Minister, *meerly* for his holding *that* Principle, of Christian Communion with any of the Faithful. The Consequence is built upon this Principle, that no human Power, can Justly exclude those from the Lord's-supper, who comply with all the Terms of Communion in that Holy Ordinance which are appointed in the Gospel; which has been hitherto acknowledged and asserted, as the Stable Principle of **NON-CONFORMITY**, and prov'd by it's best Advocates by invincible Arguments, to which I despair of ever meeting with a fair Answer; and therefore in the present Debate, I shall take it for granted by the Gentlemen and Christian People with whom I have to do; and

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and apply myself wholly to the proof of the *Ante-*
cedent or first Proposition. The Reader will per-
 ceive, that it will not be sufficient for shewing
 the falshood of my *Antecedent* or first Proposition,
 to shew, that the above recited Principle against
 Subscribing &c. is condemn'd in the Gospel, or
 proved to be a Mistake, (tho' if they do that
 and no more, I promise that upon Conviction,
 I will heartily Renounce it) unless it be shewn
 at the same time that the Gospel hath enacted
 that all Ministers who hold it, *meerly* because they
 hold it and act in pursuance of it, ought to be
 Excluded by their fellow Christians from the
 Lord's-supper: For St. Paul does in express
 Terms condemn the Principle of the Jewish
 Christians, while he says, (Rom. xiv. 14.) *I*
know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that
there is nothing unclean of itself, and yet he com-
 mands their Fellow-christians who saw the Er-
 ror of that principle, to hold Communion with
 those who held and maintain'd it.

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I readily grant, that a Scandalous Violation
 of any of the essential precepts of the Christian
 Religion impenitently persisted in will sufficient-
 ly warrant any Christian in his refusing Commu-
 nion to the guilty, according to the Apostolical
 Rule, 1 Cor. v. 11. *But now I have written to*
you not to keep Company, if any man that is called a
Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idola-
ter, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner,
with such an one, no not to Eat. But the above
 recited Principle of the Non-subscribers can ne-
 ver be comprehended under any of these Heads.
 I grant likewise, that the making a new Funda-
 mental Article of Faith, because that is making
 of another Gospel (the Maintainers whereof are
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pronounced *Accursed*, Gal. i. 9.) will justify the refusal of Christian-communion : But that is not the present Case. The Non-subscribers tho' they believe their own Principle to be an important Truth, do not reckon it a Fundamental.

It is likewise evident, that any Error that is destructive of Christianity, or a Fundamental Error or Heresy is a sufficient cause of Exclusion from the Lord's-supper, because he that holds it can't be justly called a Christian ; this is clearly implied, 2 John 9, 10. *Whosoever Transgresseth and abideth not in the Doctrine of Christ hath not GOD : He that abideth in the Doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this Doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.* Titus is commanded to reject an Heretick, after the first and second Admonition, (Tit. iii. 10.) and Timothy is commanded to withdraw himself from any Man who will not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness, (1 Timothy vi. 3, 5.) But I have already prov'd, that the Principle of the Non-subscribers is no Fundamental Error, (if it be any Error at all) ; and it's very inconsistent with the Principles of those who insist upon Subscription to the *Westminster Confession* as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, to maintain the Non-subscribing Principle to be a Fundamental Error : For that Confession does not make it so, nor do's it make the Contradictory, or the Subscribing Principle, a Fundamental Truth, nor indeed do's it say any thing in Favour of it ; and therefore can never be a sufficient, and far less, the sole and exclusive Test, accord-

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ing to those whose Scheme must charge it with the Omission of an Essential and Fundamental Article of Faith. But to draw the Argument to a Decisive Point, if there be any Law of Christ for debaring Ministers from the Lord's-table, *meerly* on the Account of that Principle of Non-subscription, let it be produced, and that will bring the Debate to a short Issue: If there be no such Law, let it be fairly acknowledged, that by the Laws of the Gospel they have as good a Right to Communion as any other Christians have. I proceed to

A R G U M E N T III.

TO exclude Ministers of the Gospel from the Communion of the Faithful, *meerly* for their being in their Judgments against Subscribing the *Westminster Confession* as a Test of Orthodoxy, does involve the Excluders in the Guilt of Schism; and therefore is not Lawful.

Tho' there may be Schism in a Church, where there is no Rupture and Breach of External Christian Communion; yet 'tis plain, where such a Rupture happens, it can't be without Schism: For that uncharitable Discord, and Alienation of Affection, which rents the Mystical Body of Christ, is inseparable from such a Rupture. Where any Man is judg'd unworthy of the Communion of the Faithful in the Lord's Supper, and yet is esteem'd by Christ a worthy Communicant, there can be no Instance given of an uncharitable Judgment, if that be not one; and if a causless Breach of Communion founded upon an uncharitable

ritable Judgment be not the Schism described
 in Scripture, I wou'd fain know what can de-
 serve that Name. I believe all Men of Sense
 will agree, that had the *Jewish* Converts ex-
 cluded their *Gentile* Brethren from the Lord's
 Supper, or had they been Excluded by the
Gentile Christians, on the Points wherein they
 differed, it wou'd have been a most notorious
 Schism; and yet the Schism wou'd just have con-
 sisted in passing an uncharitable Judgment a-
 gainst the Party Excluded, treating them as
 unworthy of Communion when they really were
 not so: I humbly conceive then, that every
 causeless Breach of Communion founded upon
 the same uncharitable Judgment, hath just as
 much of Schism in it as that Instance wou'd
 have had. What confirms this Notion of
 Schism, is, that the Apostle *Paul* having given
 a large Description of the Mystical Body of
 Christ (1 Cor. 12th. chap.) by the Similitude
 of the Human Body and the Union of its
 Members, admires the Wisdom of God in temper-
 ing the Mystical Body of Christ so wonderfully
 as to make each single Member capable of kind
 Offices to the whole, and the whole capable
 of the same to each Member; and the Design
 of this noble Contrivance, he declares to be
 (v. 25.) *that there shou'd be no Schism in the Body:*
But that the Members shou'd have the same
Care one for another. A hearty Concern and
 Christian Solitude for the Spiritual Wellfare
 of one another is the necessary Fruit of
Fervent Charity which is the *Bond of Perfection*,
 and knits the Members together and
 prevents Schism; and therefore where this
 mutual Care and Concern is wanting in the
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Members, it must flow from a very faulty Coolness of Affection and uncharitable Indifference, which disunites and disjoins them, renders them feeble, and at last breaks out in an open Schism. When Christians do Groundlessly exclude one another, from the Lord's Supper, the Party Excluding do's plainly discover a Want of Christian Tenderness, Love and Care for the Spiritual Wellfare of those they exclude; they deprive them of one of Christ's instituted Means for attaining to Soul-refreshing Communion with their Blessed Lord; and for obtaining signal Manifestations of the Light of his Countenance; they deny them a Gospel-Means of encreasing their Faith in him and Love to him, and of Spiritual Nourishment to their Immortal Souls; and are not these grievous Injuries? Injuries so Extensive, as to reach, not only to the Persons Excluded, but to the whole Body of Christ. For the Apostle assures us, (*Ephes. IV. 16.*) that the whole Body fitly joyn'd together, and compacted by that which every Joynt supplieth according to the Effectual Working in the Measure of every part maketh Encrease of the Body, unto the Edifying itself in Love; every single Member, has in the Exercise of vital Communion, an Influence upon the whole for its Encrease and Edification; and therefore whatever is injurious to the Spiritual Wellfare of any one Member (as certainly the denying him Christ's instituted Means of Grace and Communion is) can't but be prejudicial to the whole Body. Such uncharitable refusing of Communion is a spoiling and setting at Nought our Christian Brethren, a wounding of their Reputation, and

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destroying of their Usefulness, so far as it is in the Power of the Excluders to do it; while they treat them in the same Manner in which the Gospel has directed us to treat *Adulterers, Drunkards*, and the very grossest of scandalous Sinners, are they not guilty of an uncharitable Neglect of **THE SAME CARE** *the Members* ought to take one for another, wherein the Apostle do's directly place the Nature of **SCHISM**?

WHEREVER the Lord's Supper, which is the Seal and Badge of the common Discipleship and Membership of all the Faithful is arbitrarily confined to a Party, it prostitutes that Solemn Ordinance, and makes it subservient to a Party Interest; an End, which not only was never intended by Christ, but is directly contrary to one of the Ends for which he appointed it, *viz.* that the Members might all be *one Bread*, and *one Body*; and therefore such a Practice favours strongly of the Spirit of Schism. The several Parties in the Church of Corinth, one whereof said, *I am of Paul*, another, *I am of Apollos*, another, *I am of Cephas*, were guilty of Schism, even without carrying Matters so high, as to exclude one another from the Lord's Supper, because they were too much attach'd to their several Party Interests, and pursu'd them by Measures which were greatly detrimental to Catholick Love and substantial serious Piety: But then I ask this Question, Wou'd not these Parties have been more guilty of Schism than they really were, had they excluded one another from the Lord's Supper, meerly on the Account of their several Party Distinctions and the Opinions and Practices which caused them, and if any

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one Party had said to the rest, *You shall not Communicate with us, nor will we Communicate with you, because you are not of our Party?* Surely this wou'd have been the height of *Schism*, and a very vile Prostitution of the Lord's Supper to serve the clashing separate Interests of their several Parties: This wou'd have been to regard the *Lord's-table* as if it had been *PAUL's-TABLE*, or *CEPHAS's-TABLE*, or *APOLLO's-TABLE*, and not as the *Lord's-table*, to which the great Lord of the Feast invites all his prepared Guests that they may Joyntly partake of the Communion of his Body and Blood. And do's not the excluding narrow Principle, against which I am now arguing, treat the *Lord's-table* as if it were the *SUBSCRIBER'S-TABLE*, and not the *Lord's*? How much better is it, I pray, than the Practice of *Novatian* (the Author of a Grand Schism, in the third Century) who "when he administered the Sacrament, and divided and gave each Man his part; with his two Hands he held those of the Receiver, saying unto him, *Swear unto me by the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that thou wilt never leave my Party, to return to that of Cornelius*; so forcing the miserable Receiver, instead of saying *Amen*, to say, *I will not return to that of Cornelius*!" (see *Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. 6. Chap. 43.*) Is it not too like the Schism of *Victor* Bishop of *Rome*, who excommunicated all the Churches who were not of his Opinion about the Time of the Celebration of the Feast of *EASTER*; for which he is sharply reprov'd by *Ireneus*, tho' he

he was of *Victor's* Sentiments about the Time of the Celebration of that Festival: How much do's it differ from the narrow uncharitable Spirit of *Stephen* Bishop of *Rome* in the third Century, who refused to hold Communion with that eminently pious Father, *Cyprian*, and indeed with all the *African* Churches meerly for their different Sentiments from him and his Party, about the Rebaptization of such as had been baptized by Hereticks and Schismatics. And because this History is so well recited by the Late Reverend Mr. **DURHAM**, in his excellent Treatise concerning **SCANDAL**, with most judicious and charitable Remarks upon it, I shall beg leave to insert what he says of it (p. 314, 315, 316.)

That Learned Divine was considering what things ought to be forbore, for preventing or for healing of Schism, and then proceeds thus,
 “ Men would eschew in such a case judi-
 “ ally to engage in such Differences, either
 “ by passing decisions in these things *pro* or
 “ *contra* in Judicatories, or by censuring, or
 “ noting with any Reproach such as differ from
 “ them. For, 1. that maketh the Division
 “ the more difficultly removable in itself. And,
 “ 2. it engageth both sides the more, and
 “ proveth a let to retiring when men would,
 “ and heightneth the Difference exceedingly.
 “ In that Difference that was between *Cyprian*
 “ and *Stephanus*, and other Bishops of *Rome*,
 “ concerning the rebaptizing of such as had
 “ been baptized by Hereticks and Schismatics,
 “ It is marked that *Stephanus* did press the
 “ Condemnation of it, did censure and refuse
 “ Com-

Communion with such as joyned with Cyprian in his Opinion : On the contrary, Cyprian did indeed call Synods and decide, but neither pressed any Man to his Opinion or Practice, nor censured any that differed in such a Matter ; and because his Carriage is so much commended by the *Ancients*, especially by *Augustine*, against the *Donatists*, not because he counted Cyprian right on the Matter ; for he disclaimed that, and owned the contrary Opinion : But because he carried in his Opinion so tenderly to the Churches Union and Peace. We shall observe two or three Passages of his, and of *Augustines* concerning him. 1. In his Epistle ad Jubaianum, *Hæc rescripsimus, inquit, nemini præscribentes aut præjudicantes quo minus unusquisque Episcoporum, quod putat faciat. Et ne quisquam pellendus a cæterorum consortio videretur (debet) nos quantum in nobis est propter hæreticos cum collegis & Coepiscopis nostris non contendimus, cum quibus divinam concordiam & pacem tenemus. Et paulo post, Serventur (inquit) a nobis patienter & leniter charitas animi, collegii honor, vinculum fidei, concordia sacerdotii.* Which Words and many other are cited by *Augustine de Baptismo, lib. 6. cap. 17.* And in another place, when he hath cited the same last Sentence and other words, giving the Reason which the Apostle hath, 1 Cor. 11. *If any man will be contentious, we have no such Custom, nor the Churches of God :* After which a little, *Augustine* subjoyneth this Approbation of his Carriage ; *Majus quippe in eo robur virtutis emineat, cum illa quæstio nondum discussa nutaret, quod aliter sentiens*

“ *tiens quam multi collega, tantam moderatione*
 “ *obtinuit, ut Ecclesiæ Dei sanctam societatem nu*
 “ *schismatis labe truncaret, quam si omnia re*
 “ *solum veraciter, sed etiam pariter sine ista virtu*
 “ *sentiret; De Baptismo, lib. 5. cap. 17* Th
 “ he saith, even though Cyprian’s Opinion
 “ was confirmed by divers Councils o
 “ Carthage. Which sheweth what Influence
 “ such Abstinence hath on the Church
 “ Peace, which is the more observable, th
 “ he used this Forbearance when he had t
 “ generality of the Church of *Affrick*, an
 “ the Authority of their Councils for him
 “ and also was provoked by the Vehement
 “ of his Opposites, and their censuring suc
 “ as were of his Opinion”.

The great *Mischief* of all the Schisms whic
 either the Holy Scriptures, or Ecclesiastic
 History gives us any account of, or whic
 we perceive in our own times, lies in this
 that they were indications of Christians layin
 an *undue* stress upon the *lesser Points* of Relig
 on, to that Degree, as to lessen the Esteem
 they ought to have shown for all who be
 the image of Christ, and in whom the cr
 dible Evidences of the Power of Godliness
 (wherein the Kingdom of GOD consist
 do appear : For, wherever their Differences
 have issued in a causeless Breach of Christian
 Communion they never failed to Exclud
 from the Lord’s-supper many who seemed
 have more Piety and true holiness than m
 ny of their own Party whom they frankly Ad
 mitted ; whereas to act the quite contrary part
 is vastly more agreeable to the Royal Law
 of Love ; and to the new Commandment

our Blessed Redeemer. I shou'd be afraid for my part, that I cou'd not be able to answer to my great Judge, if I shou'd deny the Gospel-seal of my Love and Communion to an eminently Pious Soul, and at the same time give to a man, who I am sure, far less deserves it; and by this means involve myself in the Guilt of denying that same divinely instituted Demonstration (for such is the Lord's-supper) of my Christian Love and Charity to a *more* worthy Object; which I dare not in *Conscience* deny to one that even appears to myself to be *less* Worthy; if this be not to love a man *more* for his being of a *Party*, than for his being a most sincere Christian, I know not what is; and if *that* be not *Schism*, I shall be obliged to any one who shall be at the pains to give me a juster Notion of it. Do's not St. Paul equally discharge the *weak* brethren, from judging and rejecting from their Christian Communion the *strong*, as he do's the *strong* from rejecting those who *were weak* in the Faith? And shall those Inspired Precepts be thought of no Force to restrain Men from rejecting better Christians than some of those they receive? Were the Great Mr. Baxter now alive (who, I dare say is drinking the Fruit of the Vine, new with his Great Master in Heaven) with many more Faithful Ministers, who are likewise sitting with him at the Heavenly Banquet, both he and they wou'd be all excluded from the Lord's Supper, for their holding the same Principle upon which we have been excluded (and by the same Persons too), in Conjunction with great Numbers now living; concerning whom

I firmly believe, that those who have excluded us will have the Remains of so much Modesty as to own, that many of their own Party whom they have receiv'd, or are very free to receive, are far inferiour to those Eminent Worthies, in singular exemplary Piety, Charity, Humility, Meekness, Patience, Selfdenial, universal Beneficence, unwearied Diligence, shining Ministerial Gifts; and in the most ornamental and heavenly Vertues of the Christian Life who, notwithstanding of the illustrious Grace of GOD in their Hearts and Lives, and that Christ is not ashamed to *hold those Saints in his right hand*, wou'd find themselves so far out of the affection and good Graces of those Excluders, as not to be admitted to the Privileges of that sacred Communion, which is left open in the Gospel to their incomparably weaker Brethren; which, they must give me leave to call by the name of Schism, until I get another Idea of it than what, I apprehend, is conveyed to me in the sacred Writings.

Having prov'd from plain Scriptural Arguments, that the Non-subscribing Principle lays no just foundation for the Breach of Christian-Communion, I must observe to the just Commendation of our General Synod, that their declared Sentiments upon this Head do perfectly agree with the Holy Scriptures: For in their Charitable Declaration made at *Belfast* 1721, they declared, "That different Sentiments on that head do not justify uncharitable Jealousies and Censures of one another, or Breach of Communion among us." The General Synod met at *London-Derry*, June 1722, came

came to five Resolutions, to which they pre-
 fix'd this Introduction, " The Synod consider-
 ing the vast Importance and Necessity of
 our continuing in that close Union among
 ourselves which has always been the Hap-
 piness, Security, and Glory, of this Church ;
 and, the fearful Mischiefs that wou'd inevi-
 tably ensue upon a Rupture and Breach of
 Communion among us" : In their *fourth* Reso-
 lution, when they had declared their own O-
 pinion, for *Adhering to the subscribing the West-*
minster-confession of Faith as a Test of Ortho-
 doxy, they immediately add, *that they desire to*
exercise Christian Forbearance towards our Bre-
thren now actually in the Ministry in this Church,
with respect to their different Sentiments on this
Head. And in their *fifth* Resolution, they
 earnestly and most seriously exhort the people (un-
 der the Ministry of Non-subscribers) to con-
 descend as far as their Consciences will allow them in
 Adhering to their Pastors. Stronger Terms can
 hardly be used to express their just detesta-
 tion of that Breach of Christian-communion
 against which I have been Arguing : And
 how cou'd they, or how can they, be of
 another Mind, if they approve of that ex-
 cellent and charitable Spirit discover'd in the
 Compilers of the Confession, Chap. xxvi. Art.
 2. *Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy*
Fellowship & Communion in the worship of G O D,
and in performing such other spiritual Services as
tend to their mutual Edification, as also in relieving
each other in outward things, according to their sever-
al Abilities and Necessities. Which Communion,
as GOD offereth opportunity, is to be extended to
all those who in every place call upon the Name of the

LORD JESUS. Their **DIRECTORY** is very exprefs to the ſame Purpoſe, for they Adviſe the Miniſter, before he proceed to adminiſter the Lord's-ſupper, to addreſs himſelf to the People after this manner,

“ Next, he is in the Name of Chriſt on
 “ the one part, to warn all ſuch as are Ig-
 “ norant, Scandalous, Profane, or that
 “ live in any Sin or Offence againſt their
 “ Knowledge or Conſcience; That they pre-
 “ ſume not to come to that Holy Table,
 “ ſhewing them, that he that eateth and drin-
 “ keth Unworthily eateth and drinketh Judg-
 “ ment unto himſelf; and on the other part,
 “ he is in ſpecial manner to Invite and
 “ Encourage all that Labour under the Senſe
 “ of the Burden of their Sins and fear of
 “ Wrath, and deſire to reach out unto a grea-
 “ ter progreſs in Grace, than yet they can at-
 “ tain unto to come to the Lord's-table, aſſuring
 “ them in the ſame name of Eaſe, Refreshing
 “ and Strength to their weak and wearied
 “ Souls.

I do not rely upon the *bare Authority* of what I have quoted from our *Confession, Directory, or Acts* of our Synods, for the ſatisfaction of Conſcience; for I freely grant they have *no Authority at all* for that Purpoſe: The word of **GOD** is the only Rule of our Faith. But, I think, my Writing in favour of a Principle maintain'd, and againſt a dangerous practical Error condemn'd in thoſe Books, and Acts, ſhou'd, at leaſt, procure me a fair hearing from thoſe who are in their Judgment for inſiſting on the *Westminster-confeſſion* as an excluſive Teſt of Orthodoxy, and
 who

who pretend so great a veneration for the Principles of those who Impose it as such; and it becomes them well to consider how they will reconcile their own Principles and Practices in this Matter.

C H A P. II.

Objections against holding Christian-communion with the Non-subscribers, considered and Answered.



THESE who have broke Christian-communion with the Non-subscribers, have pretended to justify their Conduct, by Arguments taken from the dangerous Tendency of this Principle against Subscribing the *Westminster-confession* of Faith as a Test of Orthodoxy; and from the countenancing and virtual approbation of that Principle, which, they think, wou'd be imply'd in their holding Communion with those Ministers who maintain it; these are all the Reasons I have yet met with; and I am now to consider and Answer them.

OBJECT. I. THE Principle of the Non-subscribers against Subscribing the *Westminster-confession* as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, hath a most dangerous Tendency; and doth, by a native and necessary Consequence, open a door to all manner of Error and Heresy in the Church. And therefore, Christian

tian-communion ought to be deny'd to those Ministers who hold it.

If the Gentlemen who Object, that the Principle of the Non-subscribers *opens a door* to Heresy and Error, have borrowed their Notion of *opening a door* from any of these places of Scripture, where this metaphorical Term is used (such as Acts xiv. 27. Mat. xxv. 10, 11. 1 Cor. xvi. 9. Rev. iii. 7, 8, 20. in which places it signifies an encouragement given to those to whom the *door* is said to be *open'd*) they must mean, that all who hold that Principle do, by their venting it and acting in pursuance of it, give countenance and encouragement to all manner of Heresy and Error, to pollute the sacred Pastoral Office; that *that* Principle obliges them to Ordain a Man were he ever so great a Heretick, and by that means to Poyson the Church with the contagion of false Doctrine. If this be their Meaning, then I deny the truth of their Assertion, and aver that *that* Principle do's not oblige the Non-subscribers to do any such thing; which will evidently appear, if we consider the true and only Sense, which *that* Principle is capable of; and one shou'd think, that the Non-subscribers shou'd know the true Sense of their own Principle better than any Body else. The Sense of it I take to be this; where a Candidate has a Regular call to the Ministry, and has all the Qualifications required by the Gospel-law in a Minister, and among other things gives, or is ready to give, a satisfactory Proof of his being Sound in the Faith, tainted with no Heresy, nor with any Error that will warrant the Church in keeping him

him out of the Ministry ; he ought not to be deny'd Ordination, or Instalment, or Licence to Preach the Gospel, *meerly* because he *conscientiously* *Scruples* Subscription, and therefore will not Subscribe the *Westminster-confession*, or even any other uninspired *Confession*, composed and imposed upon him by Fallible Men, as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy. Now, tho' the Ministers humbly think it will be a very hard task for any Man to prove, that a Man of this Character may warrantably be excluded from the Ministry, merely on the score of Non-subscription to any one imposed human *Confession*, (because as they verily believe, Christ hath approved, sent and called him to the Ministry, and hath not left it in the Power of the Church to reject those whom he sends to Labour in his own Vineyard) ; yet my present Subject do's not oblige me to insist on the truth of their principle, as the only or chief Answer to the *Objection* against Christian-communion with them : But 'tis sufficient to my purpose, if I prove, that the Non-subscribing Principle, as I have explain'd it, do's not necessarily oblige those who hold it to Ordain, Instal or License, or give the least Approbation of, or Encouragement directly or Indirectly to the Ordination, Instalment or License of any Man who is an Heretick, or who holds an Error for which he ought to be excluded by the Laws of Jesus Christ, or of any Man of whose Soundness in the Faith they have not satisfactory Evidence. I confess it will be very amazing to me to find, that any Man of tolerable good Sense (who shall read and duly weigh that Principle as I have

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explain'd 'it) can after all, maintain that *that* Principle obliges the Non-subscribers to Ordain, or give any countenance to a Man of heretical or pernicious Principles ; when the quite contrary is, not by implication, but directly and expressly supposed in the Explication of the Principle itself ; wherein this case is, in so many words, put, that the Candidate *doth give, or is ready to give, satisfactory proof of his being sound in the Faith, tainted with no Heresy, nor with any Error that will warrant the Church in keeping him out of the Ministry* : What ! shall a Principle oblige a Man to Ordain an Heretick, tho' it expressly provides that the Person Ordain'd shall give satisfactory Evidence of his being no Heretick ? shall we interpret a Principle, as having a tendency and leading, in its Consequence, to a thing against which it establisheth and provideth an Explicit and sufficient Salvo ?

If it be alledged, that those who tear down the very Hedge which the Church hath planted, to surround and guard the precious Truths of the Gospel from the attacks which Heresy and Error do make upon 'em (as all those are supposed to do, who deny the power of the Church to impose Subscription to the *Westminster-confession*, or to any one uninspired Creed and Confession, as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy) must, by consequence, destroy a very valuable security for Truth, tho' they do not intend to do it ; and in so far as they destroy any one valuable security for Truth, in so far they must, by consequence, encourage and open a door to Heresy and Error to creep in and make its way thro'

thro' that wide and destructive Gap which their Non-subscribing Principle has made in the publick Securitys of the Orthodox Faith.

To this I Answer, that, tho' there were no Subscription, or publick Assent, required in any part of the visible Church to the *Westminster-confession* or any other particular uninspired *Confession*, as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, yet all the essential Securitys upon which the preservation of divine Truth and the prevention and removal of Heresy and pernicious Errors do necessarily Depend, would remain inviolable notwithstanding; that these *Essential* Securitys against Heresy and Error have no dependance upon these *Confessional* Securitys; but on the contrary, that all the Security impos'd human *Confessions* can give to Truth and Purity derive all their Virtue (if they have any) for preserving Christianity in its uncorrupted Simplicity, from these essential Securitys, which can subsist without them, and fully and sufficiently preserve the Church from poysonous Errors. To justify this Answer, I will give a brief Scheme of these *Essential* Securitys; in which, both Subscribers and Non-subscribers are perfectly agreed; and, shew their sufficiency, independent on all imposed human *Confessions*, to keep out and cast out all damnable and dangerous Error and Heresy.

THE *First* grand security for Divine truth against Heresy and Error is the Holy Bible, the only Rule of Faith; by which alone we can discern between Truth and Error in Matters of Revealed Religion; from which alone all

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Arguments against Error and Heresy that are conclusive and convincing are taken; which are able to make Men wise unto Salvation, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; that the Man God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good Works, (2 Tim. III. 15, 16, 17.) "and tho' all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all, yet these things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for Salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the Learned but the Unlearned, by a due Use of the ordinary Means, may attain unto a sufficient Understanding of them"; all this Virtue was in the Holy Scriptures before any Human Confession was imposed, or so much as formed, and would still remain if the Imposition of them all were remov'd.

Secondly, ANOTHER Essential Gospel Security against the poisonous Influence of Heresy and Error, consists in a diligent and faithful Performance of several important Duties, incumbent on all private Christians, in the several Stations, for the Preservation of the Faith once delivered to the Saints; such as (1.) the sincere Love of the Truth. The coming of the Man of Sin (the Head of the Great Antichristian Apostacy) is described (2 Thes. ii. 10, 11.) as attended with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness in them that perish; the farthest Reason of his Success, was, because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this Cause, the Apostle foretold

told that, *God wou'd send them strong Delusion;*
that they shou'd believe a Lie. And therefore a
 sincere Love of the Truth is one of the best
 Antidotes against Error. And what shou'd hin-
 der naked Truth from appearing in as full and
 strong a Light for captivating our Love and
 Affection, as it can do when it is adorned
 with the nicest Terms of human Art and
 prop'd with the strongest Pillars of human
 Authority; which may indeed obscure, but
 can never add to its intrinsic Beauty and
 Excellency, the only solid and lasting Motives
 of a genuine sincere Love of it? (2ly) To
 make impartial and diligent Enquires after
 Truth. An impartial Enquirer must divest his
 Mind of all secret Prejudices and Preposses-
 sions contracted by Education, human Autho-
 rity, Custom and Tradition, worldly Interest,
 overvaluing or undervaluing the Understanding
 and Integrity of those on either side of a
 Question, or such like Byasses of the Judge-
 ment; resolving patiently to hear and mature-
 ly to consider, what is said on all Sides;
 and being entirely open to Conviction, to be
 as ready to embrace Truth when it is shown
 him by such as he takes for an Enemy, as
 if it were detected by one of the prime Pillars
 of his own Party. An impartial Examinati-
 on of the Truth issued in the Conversion of
 the noble Bereans: For they were more noble
 than those of *Thessalonica* in that they received the
 Word with all Readiness of Mind, and searched
 the Scriptures daily, therefore many of them believed.
 (Acts xvii. 11, 12.) To prove all things, is the
 ready way to make us hold fast that which is
 good. To try the Spirits, whether they are of God

is an instituted and essential Security against the *false Prophets* (1 *Jo.* iv. 1.) and this Security is of its own Nature, wholly independent of all human Decisions. The best Advocates that have appear'd in Defence of them have found it difficult enough to show their Consistency with the Freedom which ought to be allowed for rendering our Inquiries into Truth impartial and unprejudiced; but none of them that I know of, have ever pretended that the Freedom and Impartiality of our Inquiries can derive any Strength or Assistance from that Quarter: For if an honest Heart can arrive at that Pitch of Virtue, as to enquire as freely into the Truth of an impos'd Confession, as if it were no *Test* at all to him, and to treat the Imposition of it as out of the Question, he can do no more and ought to do no less; that is, he ought to have no Dependance at all upon the Imposition of it, but search impartially for what God hath declared to be his Mind without any Regard to what Men have thought fit to impose as their Test. And therefore 'tis plain that the Imposition of an Uninspired *Confession*, hath no more Security in it for Truth, than in so far as it contains a just Decision upon a fair and impartial Examination, and it would have all the same Force, if it were not impos'd at all. (3^{ly}) A sincere practical Obedience to the will of God, in a conscientious Performance of all known Duty, avoiding all known Sin. *If any man will do the will of God,* (says our Saviour, *Jo.* vii. 17.) *he shall know the Doctrine whether it be of God, and* Heresy is a work of the Flesh, and therefore *those who put away a good Conscience,*

make Shipwreck

Shipwreck of their Faith, (1 Tim. i. 19.) and play their surest Game upon such as are laden with Sins, and led away with divers Lusts, (2 Tim. iii. 6.) and the deceived after **THEIR OWN LUSTS** heap up to themselves Teachers, will not endure sound Doctrine, turn away their Ears from the Truth, and shall be turned into Fables, (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.) The Character, given by the Apostle Peter, of the false Teachers, of whom he foretold, (2 Pet. ii. 1.) that they shou'd privily bring in damnable Heresies, was that thro' covetousness they shou'd with feigned Words make Merchandize of Souls (v. 2.) walking after the Flesh, in the Lust of Uncleanness; presumptuous, speaking Evil of the things they understand not, counting it Pleasure to riot in the day time having Eyes full of Adultery, and that cannot cease from Sin, and an Heart exercis'd with covetous Practices (ver. 10, 12, 13, 14.) Jude calls them ungodly Men, and sensual (ver. 4, 19.) St. Paul gives us this Character of those who will not consent to the Doctrine according to Godliness, that they are proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Questions and Strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, Strifes, Railings, evil Surmising, perverse Disputings of Men of corrupt Minds and destitute of the Truth, supposing that Gain is Godliness. And the Head of the grand Antichristian Apostacy opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God shewing himself that he is God; (2 Thes. ii. 4.) and hath contriv'd his false Doctrines so as to gratify the Ambition and Avarice of himself and his Clergy, and to complement his blind Votaries with impious Indulgencies in all their sensual Lusts, that

they may the more tamely resign to him that Power and Wealth, which he grasps at, to support his Tyranny, and fill his Coffers.

I believe it will be found from Experience, that not only the grosser and more abominable Errors that have been vented in the Christian World, have taken their Rise from (and have been abetted and propagated by) the vilest of Lusts; but that, at least, a great many Errors of an inferiour Nature owe their Source and Origin to the Corruptions of the Flesh tho' less discernable; for Example, *meer Inattention*, which is the Spring of a Thousand Errors, proceeds generally from Indolence of Spirit, a lazy disposition which can't bear the Fatigue of that intense Application and hard Study, which are absolutely necessary in many Cases for finding out the Truth; this a lazy indolent Man dreads as a *Weariness to the Flesh*; and therefore from a meer Principle of Carnal Ease do's not apply himself thoroughly, as he ought to do, to labour all those Subjects in his Thoughts, about which he finds himself inclin'd to pass a Judgment; and therefore often forms a wrong Judgment: Now this immoderate Desire of carnal Ease is as truly a Lust of the Flesh as Intemperance or any other instance of Lust can be. The true fear of GOD and sincere Piety mortifies all these Lusts, plucks up by the root all these grand Sources of Heresy and Error, and therefore is one of the very best Securities against the Introduction, continuance and growth of Error. The *Dctrine according to Godliness* is agreeable to the Genius of a Pious Mind, and therefore finds an easy Entrance and good Reception there. Heart Purity makes us capable

able of seeing God ; and when the Understanding is refined from the Dregs of Lust, which blinds it, it recovers its Spiritual Power of perception of Divine Truths : *good understanding* *all they that do his Commandments*, (Ps. cxi. 1.) His Promise to those that fear him, is, *his Secret shall be with them*, and that *he shall shew them his Covenant*, (Ps. xxv. 14.) and *whereas evil men understand not Judgment, they seek the Lord, understand all things* (Prov. viii. 5.) all those who are *Christ's Disciples* *heed, and continue in his word* (i. e. are truly Christians) are expressly intitled to that promise (Jo. viii. 32.) *ye shall know truth, and the truth shall make you free. And he that is spiritual judgeth all things* (1 Cor. ii. 15). Now will any Man say, that sincere Piety (the best Security for Truth) cannot subsist without Subscribing the *Westminster Confession* as an exclusive Test of Orthodoxy ! or, that Subscription to it, gives the Church any Security at all, where there is nothing of the Fear of God or of true Religion in the Heart of the Subscriber ! that Piety and practical Holiness will not produce the same Effects in a *Non-subscriber* as they do in a *Subscriber* ! that they will be just as good Securities against Error and Heresy in one, as in t'other ! (4ly) Growth in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter ii. 18.) shou'd be the chief work of every Christian, and is as effectual a Security for Truth, as Ignorance is a certain cause of Error. Mutual Converses among Christians whereby Knowledge is communicated and encreased, and the diligent use of these Writings of knowing and learning Men which Providence hath blest the World

World with, are excellent and useful Means when rightly used, and great helps to discover Truth, and subdue Error. But pray, what Knowledge does the Imposition of any Confession give us? The Confession itself, if it be well fram'd, may help us to know the Scriptures, just as any good Commentary on the Bible, as any other good Book in Divinity may, and no otherwise; and this it cannot fail to do, when it is *not* imposed, at least as well as when it is. If Subscription can give no peculiar Virtue nor Efficacy to a Man's Knowledge, why may not a rich Treasure of Progressive Sanctified Divine Knowledge in a Non-subscriber prove as good a Security against Error and Heresy in him, as the same degree of Sanctified Knowledge can prove in any of his Subscribing Brethren? (5ly) Fervent Prayer to God for Success in our Endeavours for the Discovery and Prevalency of Truth over Error, and for the Aids of Divine Grace, and the Influence of his Holy Spirit, ought to be our daily Exercise, and is one of the best Securities against Heresy and Error. We shou'd pray that *God wou'd open our Understanding that we may understand the Scriptures, that he would open our Eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of his Law, being well assured that if any Man lack Wisdom (as all of us do) he shou'd ask it of God, who giveth to all Men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him; and that our Heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Can there be any better Security for Truth than the Assistance of that Holy Spirit, by whose Inspiration the Sacred Oracles the only Standards of Divine Truth were written? And with any

any man say, that the Spirit of God is confined to Subscription! or that the Holy Spirit poured out on a Non-subscriber won't as effectually discover the Truth to him as to any other Christian, and guard him against Heresy! or that *the Effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man will not avail* except he subscribe! or, that *Subscription* without fervent Prayer will obtain the Spirit! or, that *Subscription* without the Spirit & the Grace of God, will ever be able to keep out of the Church any Heresy or Error whatsoever, or purge it out after it has appeared! and if none of these things can be pretended, I must conclude that this Scriptural Security has no Dependence on the Imposition of Confessions, receives no additional Strength from thence, and wou'd remain inviolable, tho' there were none of them impos'd any where. (6ly) The Sincerity of our Religious Profession of the Truth, after we have discovered it, is one of its greatest Securities. No Danger ought to intimidate a Christian, and no earthly Comfort ought to prevail with him, to profess what he do's not believe. The Apostle teacheth us that *with the heart man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the mouth Confession is made unto Salvation*, (Rom. x. 10.) When the Confession of the Mouth proceeds from the Belief of the Heart, and is perform'd as an Act of Homage to the God of Truth, it entitles a Christian to our Saviour's Promise, (Matt. x. 32.) *whosoever shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven.* I'm confident, no one will pretend that the imposing of human Forms of Confession can have the least influence on the sincerity of our

Re.

Religious Profession of Christian Doctrines; in so far as a Man is induc'd to profess a divine Truth, from the Commandments Men, the sincerity of his Profession is proportionably diminished; for that ought to be made from a conviction of Truth upon the testimony of GOD, and his Authority commanding our Religious Profession of it, and from NO OTHER spring or Motive whatsoever. Are human imposed Confessions necessary to cure men of hyocrisy? can they change the Heart, and make of a knave an honest Man, and give a sincere Heart, to a rotten dissembling Professor? if they can do none of these things, and if a Christian or Minister may be in all respects as sincere without either imposing or submitting to them; then I shou'd think, the sincerity of our Religious Profession (a grand security against Heresy and Error) has no manner of Dependence upon them, and that it becomes the stronger; for being made without all regard to the Human Power that enjoyns them; and consequently wou'd remain firm and unshaken, tho' the exercise of that Power were wholly laid aside.

III. Another scriptural Security for Truth against Error, is the divine Institution of a Gospel Ministry, the Gospel Method of trying the Qualifications necessary in Ministers, and a faithful Discharge of Pastoral Duties to the Flock. Pastors and Teachers were given to the Church for perfecting the Saints, for edifying the Body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the son of GOD to a perfect Man, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. GO

path promised to give his Church *Pastors* accord-
 ing to his own Heart, who shall feed them with know-
 ledge and with understanding, (Jer. 5. 13.) Their
 great Lord and Master has solemnly charg'd
 them to *preach sound Doctrine*, to give themselves
 to reading and Meditation and Prayer; that they
 may be *apt to teach*, able to convince gainsayers, by
 detecting and refuting their Errors, and proving
 the great Truths of the Gospel by their pro-
 per and native Evidence, *not corrupting the word*
of GOD, but as of sincerity, but as of GOD, in the
sight of GOD, speaking in Christ; not walking in
craftiness nor handling the word of GOD deceitful-
ly, but by Manifestation of the truth, commending
themselves to every Man's Conscience in the sight of
GOD. They are to take heed to themselves and to
their Doctrine, and to watch for the Souls com-
 mitted to their care, as they that must give
 an Account. Pastoral watching, was the Re-
 medy prescrib'd by the Apostle Paul to the E-
 phesian Bishops or Elders against the grievous
 wolves, who after his departure were to come
 in among them, *not sparing the flock*; and against
 the false Doctrines to be taught by such as were
 to arise from among themselves speaking perverse things,
 to draw away Disciples after them, (Acts xx. 30, 31.)
 The Church ought to Elect such as have Gifts
 and Capacity for this work, and sincere ex-
 emplary Piety and Charity, to make Conscience
 of it. All these Gifts and Qualifications, and
 particularly their Soundness in the Faith, may
 be sufficiently known without the imposing of
 any human Confession just as well now as they
 were for the space of the first three hundred
 Years, in the most flourishing times of the
 Churches Purity. Can Orthodoxy, or sound-
 ness

ness in the Faith, depend upon an Imposition which cannot produce one good Argument to prove the smallest divine Truth? Is not the divine Testimony the only Argument to prove an Article of Faith? How then can the soundness of any Man's Faith depend upon what cannot prove his Faith to be sound? Cannot a good Preacher (if he preacheth sound Doctrine) prove his Doctrine to be agreeable to the word of GOD, without Subscribing any Creed or Confession? and if he can do so, what can possibly hinder the same Person, before he be Ordain'd, to use the very same Arguments from Scripture to prove the Soundness of the very same Doctrine; to the satisfaction of his Ordainers, or to prove any other true Doctrine by the fair and convincing way of Gospel Evidence? And if any human Confession, or any other good Book has helped him to discover Gospel Evidence, why may not he borrow all the help he can get, and use it as skilfully and pertinently when those Books *are not* imposed as Tests as when *they are*.

IV. THE impartial exercise of Christian-discipline, as a Divine Institution, to which Christ hath annex'd a promise, is another Scriptural Security for Truth against Heresy and destructive Error, which I have shewn in my second Argument in the first Chapter to be sufficient causes for Christians to deny Communion to those who are tainted with them. And may not this be sufficiently done without any imposed exclusive human Tests of Orthodoxy? and was it not done as effectually in the primitive Church, where there was *no* such Imposition, as ever it has been in any

ucceeding Ages of the Church? Besides, I insist upon it, that the Communion of the Faithful, or the office of the Ministry, from which such Hereticks are to be excluded by the Rules of Christian-discipline, being matters of pure Revelation; and the Scandal of *Heterodoxy* being to be try'd by *no other Law* but the Law of Christ, how is it possible, that its Security against Error shou'd borrow the least Strength from what is purely human, seeing all its Vertue and Efficacy lies entirely in its being a divine Ordinance?

V. THE Covenant of GOD is a most perfect and sufficient Security against Heresy and pernicious Errors. When GOD is giving a design'd Description of the Gospel-covenant, he presents us with an exprefs Article about this matter, when he says, (Jer. xxxii. 33.) *I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their GOD and they shall be my People, and they shall teach no more every man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.* Therefore the believing *Corinthians* who were brought into this Covenant, were manifestly declared to be the *Epistle of Christ*, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living GOD, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the Heart, (2 Cor. iii. 3.) The great and saving Truths of the Gospel recorded by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost in our Bibles, are (pursuant to this everlasting Covenant) engraven in the hearts of all good Christians in indelible Characters by the same blessed Spirit; and that this is the certain priviledge of all good Men, and

an effectual preservative against damnable Errors, St. John assures us (1 John ii. 20, 26, 27.) *But ye have an unction from the holy one and ye know all things : These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you : But the anointing which ye have received from him abideth in you ; and ye need not that any man teach you : but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie : And even AS IT HATH TAUGHT YOU ye SHALL ABIDE in him.* For this Reason the Apostle Paul assures all Christians, (2 Cor. i. 21, 22.) *Now he that stablisheth us with you in Christ, & hath anointed us, is God ; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts.* He placeth the stability of Christians on the sure foundation of their being thus anointed of GOD. While the Lord Jesus Christ continues to be the Surety and Mediator of this Covenant, and as such hath confirm'd it by his Blood, and purchas'd for all his People all necessary Blessings, and all the Faith and Grace that is necessary for the application of 'em, hath taught us as the great Prophet of the Christian-church all necessary Truth, and as our King and Lawgiver subdued the Corruption and darkness of our Minds, (the very spirit and malignity of Error,) and wrote on our Hearts a saving transcript of his precious Laws ; those who trust in him, and are stedfast in his Covenant may with an humble Confidence put in their claim to the Privileges of his Sheep, who *shall hear his voice,* whom none shall be able to pluck out of his Hand. But, pray, what has this to do with the imposition of human exclusive Tests of Orthodoxy ?

Er-odoxy? Must the divine Veracity and Faithfulness, the everlasting Covenant of the GOD of Heaven (one of the *immutable things wherein it is impossible for GOD to lie*) be suspended upon the Impositions of weak and fallible Men, or thought capable of deriving any additional strength from them? GOD forbid. Must Non-subscribers be declared out of GOD's Covenant, or left to the uncovenanted Mercy of GOD? or if they be in Covenant with GOD, and have comply'd with the Terms of it, shall they be declared to have forfeited the Priviledges of GOD's Covenanted People, tho' he has promised to *shew his Covenant* to all who fear him, and that he will *never leave them nor forsake them*?

All these Gospel-securities against *Heresy* and Error are firmly maintain'd by the Non-subscribers; and in my humble Opinion, the Scriptural Account I have given of 'em, with the remarks I've made upon each of 'em singly, both fairly and fully prove their sufficiency to answer all the ends for which the great Law-giver of the Christian-church hath appointed 'em: And if they do not answer Ends, which Christ never had in View, that shall not in the least abate my esteem of their perfection and sufficiency; for I am satisfy'd that any End that the wisdom of GOD never designed, and that any means not instituted by his Authority, tho' it be used by Men for promoting an end which he approves, can never be justly accounted a part of the Christian Religion, and therefore can never be warrantably imposed by Men, as the only and necessary Terms upon which any Christian is to enjoy Com-

Communion with the Church in the Lord's supper or in any other divine Ordinance. But I can't help thinking, that where the infallible Oracles of GOD, in which *the Faith once delivered to the Saints* is clearly and fully revealed ; are impartially and diligently Search'd into, from a sincere Love of the Truth, and practically Obeyed in an Holy Conversation such as becometh the Gospel ; where by fervent prayer GOD is sincerely sought and depended upon for the discovery of the Truth where there is a sincere profession made of the Truth so far as we know it, and endeavours conscientiously used for the growth of Christian Knowledge and true Grace, where a Gospel-ministry is chosen, that can give all the credible Evidences of their having us'd, and that they are using such pious Endeavours as have been mentioning, and that they have all necessary Gifts and Qualifications requisite in them by the Laws of Christ, and particularly *aptness to teach*, Abilities to *convince gainsayers*, and soundness in the Faith, to be tried by the Church, to whose satisfaction they ought to make it appear, that they are able to prove the pure and uncorrupted Faith of the Gospel by its own native and proper Evidence ; where such a Ministry do faithfully preach the Gospel and perform all the Duties of the Pastoral Office carefully ; where Christian-discipline is impartially exercised, according to the word of GOD, against scandalous Immoralities and pernicious Errors that subvert the Faith of the Gospel ; and where precious Truths are according to GOD's Covenant, written in the Hearts of Ministers and Christians

and effectually taught 'em by the saving illumination of the Spirit of G O D: I can't help thinking; I say, that where these Essential Gospel-Securities do concur, that they are the only Securities that can be relied upon for the Preservation of Divine Truth, and for the Prevention of Heresies and pernicious Errors; and that they are sufficient for all these Purposes, and can receive no real Strength or Vertue from the Imposition of Subscription to the *Westminster Confession*, or any other uninspired Confession as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, and can perfectly subsist without all such Impositions: For if these Impositions were any real Security to Truth, then they cou'd lay a Candidate, Minister, or other Christian under an Obligation to believe or profess some Truth which he wou'd not be oblig'd to believe or to profess, if the Confession were not impos'd upon him as the sole Test of his Orthodoxy; for without laying him under some Obligation which he was not under before, it can be no additional Security for the Truth: But it cannot possibly lay him under any such Obligation; for he that believes any Point of reveal'd Religion, for any other Reason whatsoever than the Testimony of God, do's, in so far as he believes it for any other Reason, fall short of the Faith requir'd in the Gospel; and he that professeth his Belief of any Divine Truth for any other Reason than because God hath commanded him to do it, do's so far come short of a religious Obedience. If any man, therefore believes any Article of the *Westminster Confession*, or of any other uninspired

Con-

Confession, meerly because such a Confession imposed upon him as a Test, and wou'd not believe it if it were not imposed, that Faith of his hath nothing in it of Divine Faith at all, it rests wholly upon the Testimony and Authority of man and not upon the only solid Basis and Foundation of Divine Faith, which is the Testimony of God. And the same is to be said of the Profession of any one or more Articles of such Confessions, when made meerly from a Regard to the Imposition of them and when such a Profession wou'd not be made in Obedience to a Divine Command, though there were no Human Authority exercis'd in the Imposition of it. What possible Security for Truth there can be in the imposing a Confession, which hath not the least Degree of Authority, to command either the Faith or Profession of any one Divine Truth, I am utterly at a loss to know.

The late Reverend, Pious and Learned Dr. Owen, hath express'd himself very clearly upon the Head of the Sufficiency of the Scriptural Securities for Truth, in his *Preface to his CHRISTOLOGIA or a Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man*: I shall transcribe a few remarkable Passages of it, desiring the Reader may weigh the Strength of his Reasoning, and compare it with what I have said. "The Defence of the Truth from the beginning (says he) " was left in charge unto, and " managed by the Guides and Rulers of the " Church in their several Capacities. And by the " Scripture it was that they discharged their " Duty; confirmed with Apostolical Tradition

consonant thereunto. This was left in charge unto them by the great Apostle, *Acts* xx. 28, 29, 30, 31. *1 Tim.* vi. 13, 14. *2 Tim.* ii. 1, 2, 15, 23, 24. *Chap.* iv. 1, 2, 3, 4. and wherein any of them failed in this Duty, they were reprov'd by Christ himself, *Rev.* ii. 14, 15, 20. nor were private Believers in their Places and Capacities, either unable for this Duty, or exempt from it, but discharged themselves faithfully therein, according unto Commandment given unto them, *1 John* ii. 20, 27. *Chap.* iv. 1, 2, 3. *2 John* 8, 9. All true Believers in their several Stations, by mutual Watchfulness, by preaching or writing, according unto their Calls and Abilities, effectually used the outward Means for the Preservation and Propagation of the Faith of the Church. And the SAME MEANS ARE STILL SUFFICIENT unto the same Ends, were they attended unto with Conscience and Diligence, the pretended Defence of Truth with Arts and Arms of ANOTHER Kind, hath been the BANE of Religion, and *lost the Peace of Christians beyond Recovery.* And it may be observed that whilst THIS WAY ALONE for the Preservation of the Truth was insisted on and pursued; that although innumerable Heresies arose one after another, and sometimes many together, yet they never made any great Progress, nor arrived unto such Consistency, as to make a stated Opposition unto the Truth, but the Errors themselves and their Authors were as vagrant Meteors, which appeared for a little while, and vani-

shed away. Afterwards it was not for
 when other ways and means for the Sup-
 pression of Heresies were judged convenient
 and needful.
 For in Process of time, when the Power
 of the *Roman Empire* gave Countenance and
 Protection unto the Christian Religion, another
 way was fixt on for this End, namely, the
 use of such Assemblies of Bishops and others
 as they called *General Councils*, armed with
 a mixed Power, partly Civil and partly
 Ecclesiastical, with respect unto the Au-
 thority of the Emperors, and **THAT**
JURISDICTION in the Church
 which **BEGAN THEN** *to be first talkt*
of. This way was begun in the Council
 of *Nice*, wherein altho' there was a Detec-
 mination of the Doctrine concerning the
 Person of Christ then in Agitation, and
 and opposed, as unto his Divine Nature
 therein according unto the Truth, yet for
 dry Evils and Inconveniencies ensued there-
 on. For *thenceforth, the Faith of Christians*
began greatly to be resolved into the Authority
of Men, and as much, if not more, Weight
 to be laid on what was decreed by the
 Fathers then assembled, than on what was
 clearly taught in the Scriptures. Beside
 being necessitated, as they thought, to ex-
 plain their Conceptions of the Divine Na-
 ture of Christ, in Words either not used
 in the Scripture, or whose Signification
 that Purpose was not determined therein.
 Occasion was given unto endless Contro-
 versy about them. Then he proceeds to
 show the miserable Contentions rais'd among

the Orthodox by this Means, about the Words
(OUSIA) and (HYPOSTASIS) among the
Greeks ; between the *Greeks* and *Latins* about
Hypostasis, *Persona*, *Substantia* and *Prosopon* ;
and makes this General Remark : “ on this
“ Occasion many Contests arose even among
“ them who all pleaded their Adherence un-
“ to the Doctrine of the Council of *Nice* ; ”
then having shewn the Artifices of the *Arians*,
and the handle they took from the Methods
us'd by the Council of *Nice* to devise, and
“ Coin words and Terms to express their Minds
“ with, ” against the Orthodox Doctrine ;
he immediately adds, “ and there were yet
“ further Evils that ensued hereon. For the
“ curious and serpentine Wits of Men finding
“ themselves by THIS MEANS set at
“ Liberty to think and discourse of the Bless-
“ ed Trinity, and the Person of Christ,
“ without much Regard unto plain Divine
“ Testimonies, in such ways wherein Cunning
“ and Sophistry did much bear Sway, begun
“ to Multiply such new, curious and false
“ Notions about them, especially about the
“ Latter, as caused new Disturbances, and
“ those of large Extent and long Continuance.
“ For their Suppression, Councils were called
“ one on the Neck of another, whereon com-
“ monly new Occasions of Differences did
“ arise, and most of them managed with
“ great Scandal unto the Christian Religion. For
“ men began much to forget the PRIMITIVE
“ WAYS of opposing Errors, and extinguishing
“ Heresies, betaking themselves unto their In-
“ terest, the Number of their Party, and Pre-
“ valency with the present Emperors. And

“ altho’ it so fell out as in that at *Constanti-*
 “ *nople*, the first at *Ephesus*, and that at *Chal-*
 “ *cedon*, that the Truth for the Substance of
 “ it did prevail (for in many others it hap-
 “ pened quite otherwise) yet did they always
 “ give Occasions unto new Divisions, Ani-
 “ mosities, and even mutual Hatreds, among
 “ the principal Leaders of the Christian Peo-
 “ ple. And great Contests there were among
 “ some of them who pretended to believe the
 “ same Truth, whether SUCH or SUCH
 “ a Council shou’d be received, that is plain-
 “ ly, *whether the Church shou’d resolve its Faith*
 “ *into their Authority*”. Next he shews the
 unjustifiable Excesses which even those Assem-
 blies who adhered unto the Truth run into, in the
 heat of Opposition to the Heresies of other
 men ; of which he gives a very remarkable
 Instance in the Excess discovered by *Cyrillus*
 of *Alexandria* in his Opposition to the *Nesto-*
rian Heresy ; and *Eutyches* his running into
 an opposite Extreme ; and remarks the watch-
 ful Care of Christ in the Preservation of the
 Truth, notwithstanding of the Disorder, scan-
 dalous Contests, and wrong Decisions of these
 Councils ; and concludes the Subject with this
 General Character of them all, whether Or-
 thodox or Heretical, and of the new Methods
 they devised for securing Truth : “ yea from
 “ the Beginning they were so far from being
 “ the only way of preserving Truth, that it
 “ was almost constantly prejudic’d by the Ad-
 “ dition of their Authority unto the Confir-
 “ mation of it. Nor was there any one of
 “ them, wherein the Mystery of Iniquity did
 “ not work, unto the laying of some Rub-

“ bish

bish in the Foundation of that fatal Apostacy, which afterwards openly ensued".

I humbly conceive that what is offer'd in the above Passages by that great Man, who was reckon'd as strenuous and as skilful a Defender of the pure Orthodox Faith as any of his Brethren in that Age, and what has been offer'd in my Answer to the *Objection* I am now considering, makes it abundantly clear, that the Imposition of Human Creeds and Confessions as exclusive Tests of Orthodoxy is not a very valuable Security for Truth, and far less the only Security, without which the Scriptural Securities cannot be sufficient and effectual; and therefore, tho' the Nonsubscribing Principle shou'd universally take, it wou'd not destroy any valuable and necessary Security for Divine Truth, nor give the least Encouragment, or open a Door to Heresy and Error.

A Second Answer to the Objection, is this; that were it true what is alledged, that the Non-subscribing Principle doth, by its TENDENCY and CONSEQUENCE, open a Door to Heresy or Error (the contrary whereof I have made appear in my *first* answer) yet that itself is no sufficient cause for denying Christian Communion to those who hold it; who are so far from seeing that consequence that they do detest and abhor as much as the Subscribers do; and who are nothing more at Heart than the Preservation and Propagation of the precious Truths of the Gospel, in that Original Purity and Simplicity, in which they were first publish'd by Christ

Christ and his Apostles. Were they making opposition to the great Truths of the Christian Religion, contained in the *Westminster-confession*, preaching or any otherways, venting Heresies or pernicious Errors contrary to the sound Doctrines therein contain'd, and did they refuse Subscription, out of love and respect to these Heresies and Errors, there wou'd (I confess) be just ground for the Objection: But this is so far from being Fact, that the contrary is as evident to all who have any tolerable degree of good Sense, Humanity, and Christian Charity; as any one fact of that nature can be. For in their Circular Letter dated *Dec. 7th. 1720*, and directed to all their Rev'd Brethren in *Ireland*, they expressly say, " We are represented
 " as Enemies to our Confession of Faith, and
 " the sacred Truths of the Gospel therein
 " contain'd. This Charge we utterly deny
 " and can't but look upon it as a groundless
 " Aspersion. We unanimously declared (at the
 " last General Synod) our adherence to the
 " Confession: And we take this Opportunity of
 " assuring all our Rev'd Brethren, that there
 " have not been any Opinions vented or received
 " in our Society inconsistent with the
 " important Articles of Religion, or such as
 " have been hitherto reputed important among
 " the Dissenting Ministers of this Kingdom.
 " We use our Confession and Catechisms, containing
 " a good summary of the Christian Religion,
 " and good helps for the understanding of the word of GOD, and as such
 " we recommend them to our People. We look
 " upon the *Marrow* and *Substance* of Christianity,
 " pointing at sound Doctrine

" an Holy Life and the Method of Salvation
 " through our Lord Jesus Christ to be *truly*
 " taught in these Books." I believe all impar-
 tial Men will go in to the Sentiments of the
 Rev'd Presbytery of *Dublin*, who in their An-
 swer to the above recited part of our Cir-
 cular Letter, are pleased to say to us, " We are
 " glad to find you expressing such an high
 " and just Esteem of the *Westminster-confession*,
 " as containing the *Marrow and Substance of Christi-*
 " *an Doctrine*, &c. Which is as much as we
 " think ought to be said of any Confession that
 " was ever drawn up by uninspired and fal-
 " sible Men, and as much as we are persuaded
 " the Rev'd Compilers of that Confession ever
 " expected shou'd be said of theirs." The
 answer of the Rev'd Presbytery of *Munster* is
 express'd thus, " We are pleased to find your
 " unanimous Declarations as to all the impor-
 " tant Articles of Religion, or such as are re-
 " puted so, and your Judgment of the Confession
 " of Faith and Catechisms, and your recommen-
 " dation of them.
 " 'Tis just that there shou'd be a due Distance
 " observed between the *very best* Composures of
 " *uninspired* Men and the sacred Oracles of divine
 " Truth ; which as Christians and Protestants
 " we are bound to maintain to be the only
 " Rule of Faith, and therefore the only Stan-
 " dard of Orthodoxy in Religion". The Mi-
 nute of the General Synod at *Belfast* 1721, con-
 cerning the Supreme Deity of Christ, expressly
 says, that the Non-subscribers profess'd to be-
 lieve that Doctrine in the STRONGEST
 T E R M S. In a small Pamphlet, entitled, *The*
good old Way, the Non-subscribers do all say,
 (for

(for that Paper is publish'd in their Name) " the
 " the Reformation from Popery is the Cause
 " of GOD; sufficiently prov'd by those glorious
 " divine Truths, which we rejoice to find con-
 " tain'd in the Confessions of the Reformed
 " Churches, and particularly in our *Westmin-*
 " *ster-Confession* ; WHEREIN we have
 " a MOST VALUABLE TREASURE
 " SURE OF GOSPEL TRUTH."

I leave it to the cooler and more sober thoughts
 of such as have taken an unwarrantable Liberty
 of traducing and misrepresenting, or at least
 of suspecting, us as *Arians* and vile Hereticks,
 as Enemies to the Sacred Truths contain'd in
 the *Westminster-confession*, to consider seriously,
 how they dare so boldly take upon them to
 Judge of our Hearts, and to pronounce us in-
 sincere in our Profession, which they must do,
 if they so much as suspect us, after what we
 have said upon these Heads in the clearest and
 strongest Terms in which we were able to ex-
 press our Sentiments. And for my own part,
 I give this publick Challenge to my greatest and
 bitterest Adversaries, and to all the world be-
 side, to convict me by fair and undeniable E-
 vidence either of *Arianism* or any other Heresy
 or pernicious doctrinal Error ; and I firmly be-
 lieve all my Rev'd Non-subscribing Brethren
 will heartily joyn in it ; and I must acquaint
 the World, that both they and I have frequent-
 ly made this challenge in the face of several
 General Synods ; and none have as yet pre-
 tended to accept of it, unless the prosecution
 now depending before the General Synod,
 meerly for the Non-subscribing Principle, may
 deserve that Name. But that prosecutors do
 not

not so much as pretend to accuse us of *Arianism* or any other Heresy whatsoever. The Charge given in against us is in these words, "That the Non-subscribers maintain Principles which open a door to let in Errors and Heresies into this Church". The principle the prosecutors, charge with opening the door to Error and Heresy is this, *that no Declaration of Faith, Creed or Confession of Faith in human words merely, or the words of fallible Men, is or can be a Test of Orthodoxy or Terms of Ministerial Communion in this Church*: To which the Non-subscribers answered, that, if the Principle last mentioned be understood in this Sense, viz. *that no particular authorized Form in the words of uninspired Men shou'd be the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, so as any particular Person offering a satisfactory Confession of his Faith in his own words, tho' other than Scripture words, shou'd not be admitted into the Ministry, in this Church*, it is not relevant, that is to say, it do's not infer Censure, and therefore ought not to be the matter of an Ecclesiastical Process. The principle, as thus explained, is undoubtedly their Principle; and, I have prov'd that it do's not destroy any real or valuable Security for truth, and therefore cannot open a door to Heresy and Error. This Account fairly proves that their repeated challenges to convict them of Heterodoxy remain yet unanswer'd; and therefore the Laws of the Gospel, and of natural essential Equity, give me an undoubted Right to make this Demand, that the Reputation of the Non-subscribers for Orthodoxy and Soundness in the Faith shou'd remain untainted, that the Noise of alarming Jealousy shou'd be hush'd, and the ignorance of foolish

Men put to silence, by that sacred Apostolical Canon, against an Elder receive not an Accusation, but before two or three Witnesses. If our Characters bid a Defiance to fair and legal Proof to hurt 'em, by what Law of GOD or Man will our Fellow-christians pretend to justify the mean and low Artifices of ill-natur'd Jealousy? If Jealousy be a sin against GOD and our Christian Brethren, can any pretence whatsoever justify a Man's continuance in it? Is this fit Language to come out of the mouth of a Christian, *Thou can't prove you to be guilty of Arianism, or any other Heresy, I will, and I ought to be, jealous of you, until you cure my jealousy by some Declaration of your renouncing that Error? that is to say, you must cure my Sin (which is only to be cured by mortifying it, and by my own Repentance and the Exercise of Charity,) by your gratifying and pleasing it, and by your encouraging me to commit it again, and by permitting me to set up an unrighteous Inquisition instead of the wholesome Discipline of Jesus Christ, which gives every Christian a Right to be reputed Innocent of every Scandal which cannot be prov'd against him.*

It is evident from what has been said, that the Non-subscribers do not see, but utterly abhor the Consequence charg'd on their Principle; and therefore, it is reasonable to believe, that all the essential Gospel-securities for Truth, which they maintain inviolable, and use with an express design to shut the door upon all Heresy and Error, shou'd be more Successful and Effectual for keeping it out, than one principle of theirs, which can only operate by an undiscovered and detested Consequence, can be for opening a door to let it in. If five Men use their united Force against one Man, who is not superior in strength to any of

the five, in keeping a *door shut* when he attempts to *open* it, no Man will be very apprehensive of the hazard of having the door open'd in that case. But here the case is much Stronger. For each of the five Gospel-securities for Truth, (which I have mention'd) and much more the Conjunction of them all, has far more Strength and Efficacy for *shutting the door* on Heresy, than *one* Non-subscribing Principle can possibly have from an unseen and disclaimed Consequence to *open the door*, and introduce it. And therefore it can be no real Service to the Interest of Religion, to raise so loud a cry of the danger of Heresy, and frighten People out of their Christian Charity to their Pastors and Fellow-Christians.

Object. II. The holding of Christian-communion with the Non-subscribing Ministers is, at least, a tacit encouragement of them in their Error.

Answer. Tho' the Non-subscribing Principle, as I have explain'd it, seems to me to be a plain Gospel-truth, which hath some important influence on the peace and unity of the Christian-church, yet I confess that those who think it an Error, cannot with a good Conscience encourage it; but then they ought not to commit *one* sin to discourage *another*, and fall into *one* Error of very great importance (such as I have prov'd a causeless Breach of Communion to be) for fear of giving a tacit or consequential Encouragement to *another* Error. The holding of Christian-communion with our Brethren, do's not at all imply the least approbation of any Principle in them which appears to us to be Erroneous; nor will the Jewish and Gentile Converts cou'd never have lawfully sat down together at the Lord's-table, and no Christians upon Earth cou'd lawfully communicate with one another; for they

all know one another to have Errors in Judgment and Practice : But their communicating implies no more than this, that they know no Error held by their Brethren, for which Christian-communication ought to be refus'd them. God himself, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity with any Approbation or Encouragement, do's nevertheless maintain a more intimate Communion with poor sinful Mortals, whose Errors in Judgment, he knows perfectly and infallibly, than they can possibly do with one another ; and seeing he commands the *Strong* to hold Communion with them who are *Weak in the Faith*, he cou'd not suppose, that their Obedience to his Command, was a sinful Encouraging of the *Weakness* and Error of those with whom they maintain'd Communion. Besides, this Objection shou'd likewise, if it were any thing to the Purpose, make these scrupulous People deny Communion to all the Laity who maintain the Non-subscribing Principle, which they do not pretend to do : For Communion with them gives equal Encouragement to *their* Error, as it do's to the Error of their Pastors. There are Qualifications requisite for the Office of Ministry, the Want whereof in any Man, is indeed a sufficient Reason why the Church shou'd not receive him as a Pastor ; but in the matter of Christian Communion, the *General* Terms are exactly the same for both Ministers and private Christians ; and the same Qualifications which entitle the one, do also entitle the other to the Lord's Table ; and whatever Fault will justify the Exclusion of the one, will plead for the Exclusion of *both*. And the Reason is plain ; because Ministers, tho'

Judge the Lord's Supper in the Capacity of Ministers, do receive it in the Capacity of Christians, and by vertue of the common Rights and Priviledges of the Members of Christ's body.

C H A P. III.

A Resolution of this Question, viz. How far Christian Prudence, Charity and Forbearance, and a Regard to the prevention of the Offence and Stumbling, and promoting the Edification of those who scruple Christian Communion, on the present Differences about Subscription, are just Reasons for determining those who have no Scruples on these Heads, to abstain voluntarily from Communion in Assemblies, whereof one part hath such Scruples and another hath none, or, for justifying an Advice to that Purpose, and how ought Ministers and Christians to conduct themselves in those Cases?

It has been the laudable and uninterrupted Practice of the Presbyterians in *Ulster*, since their first Settlement in *Ireland* above one Hundred Years ago, until the late unhappy Differences fell in among them about Subscription, for Ministers and private Members of adjacent Congregations, as God gave them Opportunity, to joy with one another in Christian Communion in the Lord's Supper, by which their mutual Brotherly Love and Joy, and all the Interests of vital Religion have

have been happily promoted and advanced to their common Edification.

The Example of the Apostles, who communicated in all the Churches where they came, is of sufficient Authority to recommend it; the Nature of the thing itself, the Design of the Lord's Supper (which is to represent all Christ's Disciples as being *one Bread and one Body*) do's evidently plead in its Defence. And no Custom was more universally observed in the primitive Church nor had better Effects on their Unity, Peace and Concord; and where, it was interrupted or refused at any time, its Refuse was either the pernicious Effect or the criminal Cause of some deplorable Schism, as in the Cases (I mentioned, in the first Chapter) of *Stephen, Victor and Novation*, besides many others. It must therefore be thought worthy of the Enquiry and serious Consideration of the good People on both Sides of the Controversy about Subscription and of their Pastors, how far the Subscribing and Non-subscribing Ministers, and their Hearers, who have no Scruples shou'd voluntarily abstain from Communion, or advise one another to do it, from a Regard to those who conscientiously, tho' weakly, scruple it, and therefore abstain from an Opinion of its unlawfulness: Or, in a word, what Answer ought to be given to the Question, as it's clearly and fully stated in the Title of this Chapter. My own Opinion (which I know to be likewise the Opinion of all my Rev'd Non-subscribing Brethren, and believe it to be the Opinion of all our Hearers,) is, that no Difference that has happened amongst us about Subscription, will justify our

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laying aside that laudable Practice, that has
 long obtain'd amongst us and our pious Fa-
 thers, of mutual Christian Communion in and
 with one another's Congregations; and that
 Christian Prudence, Charity and Forbearance,
 and a Regard to the Edification, and Care to
 prevent the Stumbling and Offence of those, who
 labour under such dangerous Mistakes and Scr-
 uples, are all strong Arguments against the In-
 terruption of that commendable Scriptural Prac-
 tice; and if I prove this, I shall at once con-
 firm my own Sentiments, and answer the only
 Arguments I have heard offered as yet on the
 other Side of the Question. All these Argu-
 ments have been pleaded in Defence of the
 Letters of Mr. Mastertown's Session to Mr.
 Haliday and me, by such as consider these Let-
 ters only as *advising* our not Communicating
 with their Congregation at *that time*; and the
 Letters themselves insist on these very Topicks.
 But because the very same Considerations may
 be as plausibly pretended, for another Branch
 of voluntary Non-communication, even where
 there are no Scruples against the Lawfulness
 of it, my Arguments will be decisive of that,
 and of all such Cases: For these of Mr. M--n's
 Congregation, who have advised us to abstain
 from Communion, in *their* Assembly, out of
 Regard to the Edification of those who
 think it unlawful to communicate with us,
 and for Fear of *giving them Offence*, may, for
 the same Reasons; decline Communion with
 us in our own Assemblies, as well as advise us to
 abstain from it in *theirs*; it is pretty hard to
 imagine, what other Reasons cou'd prevail both
 with their Minister and with the Generality of
 them-

themselves, to abstain constantly from Communion in our Congregations, since their first Separation from us, when they might have joyn'd with far greater Conveniency to themselves, than in the Congregations of Subscribing Ministers at some Miles distance from them where he and divers of them have frequently communicated since our Divisions began.

Let us first of all enquire into the true scriptural Sense of *giving Offence* and *stumbling* of Brethren; which indeed is a very great Evil and is directly contrary to *Edification* and *fructification* of *Charity*. Our Blessed Lord expounding the Parable of the Sower tells his Disciples that he that received the Seed into stony Places when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended, (Matth. xiii. 20, 21.) he forsakes Truth to avoid Persecution, and in the same Sense he says, (Matth. xi. 6.) *Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me*: And he foretold, (Matth. xxvi. 31.) that his Disciples shou'd be offended, because of him, in that Night wherein he was Betrayed. The Reason given by our Blessed Lord, why the right Eye that offends, shou'd be plucked out, and the right Hand that offends, shou'd be cut off, is because it is profitable for us that one of our Members shou'd perish, and not that our whole Body shou'd be cast into Hell, (Matth. v. 29, 30.) in which Words he directs us to part with all known Sin, were it ever so dear to us, even as a right Eye or right Hand, because it is Ruinous to our Souls; and in the same Sense offends us. Whatsoever therefore doth of its own Nature lead and incline our Brethren to forsake the Christian Faith, or to practise

ing which is ruinous to our Souls must be
 fully accounted a *stumbling Block* laid in their
 way by those who lead them to it : Thus all
 sins committed by us are offensive to others to
 whom they are known, because they are of an in-
 ferious Nature, set a bad Example, and tempt
 our Neighbours to an Imitation ; but especially
 when we directly solicit and advise Men to *run*
into the same excess of Riot with us.

But there are Actions, which being Indifferent
 neither Commanded nor Forbidden in the word
 (GOD) cannot, of their own Nature, lead Men
 to Sin ; yet because they appear sinful to some,
 produce the same ruinous Consequences and
 fatal Effects on them, or have a tendency to
 do it, thro' their Weakness, as if they were
 really sinful in themselves ; And therefore, in
 these Circumstances ought to be forbore, because
 they were judged by the Apostle to be *stumbling-*
blocks, and an *offence* given to our Brethren.
 This was the Rule he gave the Gentile
 Christians, for the management of their Christian-
 liberty, in the matters of *Meats* and *Drinks* ;
 he making no Distinction in them seem'd
 to the weak Jewish Christians to be a vio-
 lation of the Law of GOD, and tempted
 them to follow that Example with a doubt-
 ing Conscience, and to incur that great dan-
 ger threaten'd by the Apostle. *He that Doubt-*
eth is Damn'd, if he Eat, because he eateth not of Faith ;
or whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin ; or, to
 judge their Brethren uncharitably, which is a
 very dangerous Sin, and must weaken the Grace
 of GOD in Men's Hearts, and produce very
 bad Effects, even tho' it shou'd not issue in a to-
 tal Apostacy from Christianity. For the pre-

vention of all which Evils, the Apostle gave them these Directions. Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge rather that no Man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in his Brothers way. But if thy Brother be grieved with thy Meat, now walkest thou not Charitably; destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. For meat destroy not the work of GOD. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that Man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor any thing whereby thy Brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak, (Rom. xiv. 13, 15, 20, 21.)

The same Apostle earnestly dissuadeth from eating things sacrificed to Idols, not as if bare eating those who did not do it out of any regard to the Idol were in itself Sinful, but because of the abuse which weak Christians would make of the Liberty, and the Misconstruction they were ready to put upon it, as if it gave them encouragement to practice Idolatry; and therefore he reasons thus against it; but take heed lest by any means this Liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any Man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idols Temple shall not the Conscience of him that is weak be imboldened to eat those things which are offered to Idols: And through thy knowledge shall the weak Brother perish for whom Christ died? but when ye sin so against the Brethren, and wound their weak Conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the World standeth lest I make my Brother to offend. (1 Cor. viii. 9-13.) It is evident to any one who considers the scriptural Account of Offence, that Offence may be given, where it is not taken; as where one does not fall into the Sin, to which the strength

ing block laid in his way do's lead him ; in this
 Christ says to Peter, thou art an offence to me.
 and, that Offence may be taken where it is not
 ; in which Sense Christ himself was a stone
 stumbling and a rock of Offence to them which
 stumble at the word ; unto the Jews a stumbling-block,
 and to the Greeks foolishness : So is precious Truth
 and necessary Duty an Offence to some ; but no
 Christian ought to omit necessary Duty or deny
 Truth, to prevent such groundless Offences ;
 for that wou'd be a giving of Offence, to prevent
 another Mans taking it, to commit a sin our selves,
 to prevent Sin in others, or, to use the Apostles
 words, to do evil that good may come of it.

Because the scriptural Idea of *Edification* is di-
 rectly opposed to that of *giving offence*, and they
 do mutually illustrate one another, I will in-
 quire into it, before I apply either of the two
 to the point in Debate. The Terms, *edifying*,
 and *Edification*, do signify, in their literal
 Sense, the building of an House, which from
 thence is called an Edifice ; and in this Sense
 the Original Words (*oikodome* & *oikodomeo*) ren-
 dered in other places by our Translators, *Edifi-
 cation* and to *Edify*, are used Luke iv. 29. and
 xvii. 28. John ii. 20. Acts vii. 47. But because
 the Church is a spiritual Edifice and called the
 House of GOD, therefore the Terms *Edifying*,
 and *Edification* are frequently appli'd to the
 Church under the image of an House or great
 Building composed of true Believers as so many
 Stones or parts of it. Ye also as lively stones are
 built up (*oikodomeisthe*) a spiritual House (1. Peter
 ii. 5.) Christ being the master Builder or prime
 Architect, says, upon this rock will I build (*oikodo-
 meso*, *Edify*) my Church (Mat. xxi. 18.) he Edi-

fies and builds his Church by giving them Laws, to be a perfect & infallible Rule of their Faith & Obedience ; by giving them his Holy Spirit, the *anointing that teacheth them* the great and essential Truths and Precepts of Christianity, that maketh them sincere Christians, that unites them by saving Faith to Christ the Foundation and chief Cornerstone, that cements them together by *Charity the bond of perfectness*, that encreaseth their Faith, and Love, Knowledge and Joy, and every Christian Virtue and Grace in them, and strengthens, beautifies and adorns the whole Building ; by giving them *Pastors and Teachers*, whom he charges to instruct them in true Religion, and to dispense faithfully the Word and Sacraments and all other instituted Means of their Edification ; and by commanding and assisting each Member to *Edify* itself, and all of them to Edify one another by the exercise of those Graces he implants in them all, and the performance of the Duties in which they enjoy the Communion of Saints. By the Blessing of GOD on the Consciencious use of those Means, and the concurring influences of the Holy Spirit ; *the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joynt supplieth, according to the effectual working in the Measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself in Love.* (Ephes. iv. 16.) Nothing can edify the Church or any Member of it but what promotes their or his Spiritual Good, and nothing can promote that but what tends to make them wise and good. Every Man is commanded by St. Paul, (Rom. xv. 2.) *to please his Neighbour for his Good to Edification.* There are different Duties and Attainments in the

the Christian Life, and 'tis for the Good of Christians to practice every Duty and to have every Gift and Grace encreased in them ; therefore *Edification* is applyed sometimes to signify what tends to promote our Spiritual Welfare in General, and sometimes to what inclines us to some particular Duty, or increaseth some particular Gifts. Pastors and Teachers were given by Christ to the Church for the *edifying of the Body of Christ*. (*Ephes. iv. 12.*) i. e. for promoting their Spiritual Welfare in all Respects and in its full Extent. Sometimes, again the publick Teaching is spoken of in scripture, under the Name of *Edification* as it promotes the Growth of Christian Knowledge, and so it's used, (*1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 5, 12, 17.*) where it's adduced as an Argument against prophesying in a Language unknown to the audience, which, because it cou'd not convey Knowledge to them, cou'd not edify them, sometimes, it is applied to the strengthening the Faith of Believers, as in *Jude 20.* *ye beloved, building up (or, edifying) yourselves in your most Holy Faith ;* and sometimes, their being improv'd in the Grace of Love, when the *whole Body* is said to *edify itself* in *it*. And Charity edifieth, (*1 Cor. viii. 1.*) The Apostle dehorts Christians from all corrupt communication out of their Mouth, and directs them to mutual Conferences that are good for the *edifying*, that is, (as he explains it *Ephes. 29.*) *that may minister Grace unto the Hear-*

We may infer from this Account, that what tends to make Men real Christians, or to make them better Christians, by subduing their Sins,

Sins, and promoting their Knowledge, Christian Virtue, Grace and sincere Piety, and their spiritual Welfare, is good for the use of Edifying. And if we compare **EDIFICATION** and **OFFENCE**, we will find them directly contrary to one another; for whatever edifies can't give Offence, and whatever gives Offence can't edify; the one leads to Sin and Destruction, to'ther, to our Christian Duty and Salvation; the one is to be carefully avoided, and the other to be earnestly pursued.

To apply all this to the Point in Debate, I will attempt to prove, that those who have no Scruples against receiving Non-subscribers into Christian Communion, and yet advise them voluntarily to abstain from it, out of a Regard to the *Edification* of those who have Scruples and for preventing *their Offence*, do **GIVE OFFENCE** and **MARR EDIFICATION**, by that very Advice; and that therefore the Foundation of the Advice is an unanswerable Argument against the Advice itself. The Advice, as founded upon the Reason given by the Advisers, gives a manifest Encouragement to divers dangerous Sins, very detrimental to the Interest of serious Religion, Charity and Peace; and therefore instead of promoting, must mar the Edification even of those for whose Edification it is pretended to be given; and can't but *give Offence* in the proper Scriptural Sense of the Term.

It is a very grievous Sin to deny Christ's Communion to the weakest of Christ's Disciples, when they have a firm and undoubted Title to it by the Laws of the Gospel, as I have fully proved in the first Chapter. It reflects

on the Wisdom, Holiness and Goodness, of our Blessed Lord ; as if his Laws about Christian-communion were too lax, and had too much Latitude in laying it open to some whom the Church from a pious Zeal for Truth find themselves obliged to exclude ; as if he were not wise enough to foresee the Danger of such a case, and to provide a suitable Remedy ; nor good enough to consult the Edification of his Church. Such an unjust Exclusion can never fail to hurt the Interest of Catholick-charity and Brotherly Love, because it kindles Contention, and brings Division in a Church to the very greatest height it can come to, and that must cause *Confusion and every evil Work* ; it makes Christ's Disciples to bite and devour one another, and so be consumed one of another, and the Vitals of practical Godliness are consumed in the Flames of their unnatural and unchristian Discords. And are we not the mournful Beholders of all these Evils at present abounding amongst the People of our Persuasion in the North of *Ireland*, as the bitter Fruits of those Animosities which have come to their greatest Height in those who have broke Christian-communion with the *Non-subscribers* ? and must unavoidably continue on their part, while they persist in that fatal Rupture they have made ; whereby they tempt, and persuade, as far as they can, all their Fellow-christians to imitate their bad Example. Wou'd not they rejoice, if all our Hearers shou'd treat us as they have done ? If they be sincere and think they have done well, wou'd not they desire others to do so too ? And therefore they must desire, that all our Hearers should reject our
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Ministry, and not content to stop there, we must be deny'd the common Priviledges of private Christians throughout the whole World if they cou'd obtain their Desire. Now this is directly to encourage the People of God to disobey that express Precept of the Gospel *We beseech you Brethren to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's Sake* (1 Thess. v. 12, 13.) were their Ministers as eminent and edifying Preachers, as Learned and Godly Divines, as painful and laborious, and as sound in the Faith as any Pastors who are now in the visible Church, they must be cast off disgraced, rendred useles, and deny'd the Lord's Supper as effectually as if they were Drunkards and Adulterers, or the vilest of Hereticks merely for their being in their Judgment against subscribing the *Westminster Confession* as the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy; and the Church, for whose Edification a Gospel Ministry was appointed, be deprived of the Benefit of their Labours; and how destructive this must be of true Gospel Edification, and what a Heap of Scandal and Offence it must introduce, let the World judge by the Effects that have already followed upon these divisive Courses: And whether such injurious Treatment of their Pastors wou'd be consistent with their *esteeming them very highly in Love for their Works Sake*.

If all those pernicious Evils are the native Fruits of that narrow imposing Spirit, that hath broke Communion with the Non-subscribers; which hath given grievous Offence and greatly

greatly obstructed Edification ; then all those who encourage that imposing Spirit do lead Men into the Sin of Imposition, and into all the Sins which it naturally and necessarily produceth ; and therefore must be chargeable with the Sin of giving Offence, and destroying Edification ; now, that such as have no Scruples against Communion with the Non-subscribers, and yet abstain from Communion with them, or advise others to do it, or advise the Non-subscribers to abstain in the case stated in the Title of this Chapter, are guilty of encouraging that imposing Spirit, I prove from these THREE Considerations.

FIRST, All the Persons who fall into these Measures of a voluntary Non-Communion, upon the Motives of *Edification*, and for avoiding of Offence, do furnish and supply the Breakers of Communion with those Reasons which according to *their* avowed Principles must confirm them in *their* dangerous Error, and strengthen their Demands of having it established by an Excommunicating Canon of the Church. The avowed Principle, upon which all Impositions are founded, as it is set off in its most popular Airs, seems to me to be this : “ that the Church not only may, but ought to forbid & discharge every thing that gives Offence and that mars Edification ; because, tho’ every Christian shou’d voluntarily abstain from such things whether the Church make any Law about them or no, yet the Church for the better securing the Observance of these weighty Matters shou’d enact them into a strict Canon, for the publick Good ”. Upon this Principle, assisted by the Concession of

the voluntary Non-communicants and Advisers; the imposing Spirit can't fail of gathering Strength, by suggesting this Argument to those who have broke, or may be inclinable to break, Christian-communication with the Non-subscribers. "Here are Persons, who upon a true
 "Regard to our Edification, and to prevent
 "matter of Stumbling and Offence, have advised the Non-subscribers *not to communicate*
 "in our Congregation, and who for the same
 "Reasons do not communicate in the Congregations of Non-subscribing Ministers; they
 "have done very well in giving that wholsome
 "Advice, and in taking these Measures;
 "surely, they can think it no Hardship, but
 "a great Benefit to the Church, to have a
 "Canon made forbidding the doing of that
 "which themselves confess ought not to be
 "done, and for the very same Reasons too
 "for which they do it not, and for which
 "they advise others not to do it! and
 "they can't pretend that this wou'd be
 "any unjust Restraint of their Christian
 "Liberty; for Christian Liberty itself is
 "put under the same Restraint by the Laws
 "of the Gospel, which forbids the use of
 "it where it gives Offence and does not
 "edify". The true Answer to this fallacious Argument, is, that Christian-liberty, consists in the using or not using things indifferent, without any Restraint from Human Decisions making them necessary; and that no Church whatsoever hath any Power of commanding or forbidding them, under the Penalty of Non-communication; for that were to add to Christ's instituted Gospel

pel Terms, which no Pretence whatsoever can justify; that things which give Offence, and are under *that* Notion forbidden in Scripture, must either be *sinful Actions*, which become Scandels as far as they are known, or things *indifferent*, used uncharitably while they lead others into Sin and Destruction; but partaking of the Lord's Supper in a Person that is intitled to it by the Laws of Christ, when a proper Opportunity is given for it, is so far from being a Sin, or a thing indifferent and matter of Liberty, that it is a plain Duty in Obedience to a Divine Law, & therefore can *never give Offence*, nor *obstruct Edification*, and is not among those things which the Apostle enjoyns Christians to forbear for these Ends; for what he wou'd have them to forbear, was, their Contentions, their Impositions of their different Sentiments and Practices, that were consistent with Sincerity, and even the *use* as well as the *Imposition* of indifferent things in the case of Scandal.

But so far was he from commanding them to forbear Communion on the Score of Offence, that he represents *their forbearing* it as a *great Offence*; and therefore Christian Forbearance, as applied by the Advisers in this Debate, is used in a Sense not only forreign, but plainly contrary, to the constant Scriptural Sense of it. This, which is the only solid Answer to that specious Pretence, is given up by the voluntary Non communicants, and their Advisers to it, upon the Principles stated in the Question; for they are of Opinion that 'tis for Edification for Christians in that

case to abstain from Communion with one another, and good for avoiding Offence which is a great Mistake founded upon a wrong Notion of *Edification* and *Offence*; which wrong Notion is, by their Advice and Practice, riveted in the Minds of the Imposers which propagates the Imposition, and corrupts the Morals of Christians; for it makes Christians fancy that whatsoever is displeasing to them, and contradicts their favorite Notions, is to be look'd upon as an Offence given 'em by their Fellow-Christians, and that the supposed Offenders must for *their Edification* be excluded from the Communion of the Faithful; which multiplies the Mystical Body of Christ, makes Christians hate one another, and raise the blind and intemperate Zeal of Men into the Degree of Fury and ill Nature, as to prove the Bane of sincere Religion, and the fatal Means of almost extinguishing Christian-unity. The *Stumbling Block* laid in the way of weak Christians by their Brethren who did eat things offered to Idols, did operate on the Minds of those whom it offended, the same Way as this stumbling Block does on the Minds of the Breakers of Christian-Communion amongst us, viz. by the Encouragement they took from their Practice who did eat without any designed Homage or Regard to the Idol, to eat with some Regard to the Idol, or, as the Apostle calls it, *with Conscience of the Idol*; and their Conscience being weak was defiled; presuming, that their Brethren's Knowledge wou'd bear them out

in what they did. These who gave the Offence, did not eat with any designed Veneration for the Idol, so our Advisers and voluntary Non-communicants do not pretend to exclude us by any formal Excommunications ; but those who have actually broke Communion with us are of another Mind ; and out of *Regard to them*, the voluntary Non-communicants and advisers do not hold Communion with us in our Assemblies, and entreat us to abstain from it in theirs ; and therefore seeing they know the Principles and Scruples of the Imposers, and yet think fit for Edification to please them, and from a *Regard to them* have conducted themselves, (which is a greater and more express Incouragment to their Impositions, than any Incouragment we find was given, by the offensive Eaters in the Church of *Corinth* to these they offended) are they not as fully and clearly chargeable with *emboldning the Consciences* of their Brethren in excluding Christ's Servants from their Master's Table, and in pressing others to do it, *as the offensive Eaters* were with what is charged on them by the Apostle when he says, *If any Man see thee which hast Knowledge sit at Meat in the Idol's Temple ; shall not the Conscience of him that is weak be emboldned to eat these things which are offered to Idols ; and through thy Knowledge shall the weak Brother perish ; for the case is this : Two Parties agree in not holding Communion with the Non-subscribers : The one refuseth to do it, because they hold it to be unlawful ; the other doth not believe it to be*

be in itself unlawful, but yet do's not communicate with them, that they *may please* those who believe it to be unlawful; and forbear and press others to forbear, from a fancy, that this Voluntary Non-communication tends to the Edification of the breakers of Communion, whom they are loath to Offend; and yet *are offending them*, that is, leading them into a sinful and dangerous Mistake, and into all the sinful and destructive Mischiefs which flow from it. It is remarkable that the Original word our Translators render (*emboldened*) is (*oikodomothesetai*) rendered so often *Edified* in other places, and this is the only place in the New Testament in which it is taken in a bad Sense, because here and here only it is applied to a particular dangerous Sin, into which some weak Christians were led, by the Offence given them by their more knowing Brethren; by whom their Consciences were *emboldened*, i. e. confirmed and taught to Argue in favour of this Sin they fell into, built up or riveted in their dangerous Error; and it is a great pity, that the Measures of these Non-communicants when they fall short of any one single Instance of Edification in a good Sense, shou'd embolden the Consciences of their Brethren in Sin, and *EDIFIED* them in the only Sense, in which the Holy Scripture makes it an Offence to attempt it.

Secondly, WHEN St. Paul went to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with him, he refused to Circumcise Titus, for which he gives this Reason, *because of false Bre-*

brethren unawares brought in, who came in pri-
 ly to spy out our Liberty, which we have in
 Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into Bond-
 age, to whom we gave place by Subjection, no
 for an hour ; that the truth of the Gospel
 might continue with you ; (Gal. ii. 4, 5.) in
 which words it is evident, that some were
 imposing Circumcision and the Law of
 Moses on the Gentile Christians as a Term
 of Communion, with them ; which the
 Apostle look'd on as a bringing of a Free
 people into Bondage ; and therefore he who
 on other occasions became all things to all
 men, and made Condescensions to avoid
 offence, when things were not insisted on
 Terms of Religious Communion ; gave
 the briskest Opposition to such Encroach-
 ments on the Liberties of Christians, and
 made a stand against them when impos'd,
 as not to give Subjection, no not for an
 hour, and he thought the Truth of the
 Gospel best secur'd, by resisting such Imposi-
 tions. This fairly determines the Case un-
 der Debate : For the Party who have
 broke Communion with us bid us stay a-
 way from the Lord's-table in their Con-
 gregation, which is an Encroachment on
 our Liberty of access to the Table of our
 common-Lord ; another Party advise us
 (who' they have no scruples) to stay away
 and abstain from Communion, and expressly
 out of regard to the Scruples of the Imposi-
 tions, that they may not be offended but E-
 njoin'd : Pray, wou'd not our staying away
 those Circumstances voluntarily, and
 from

from a regard to the Motives of the advice, have been a contradiction to St. Paul's Practice; this wou'd have been a paying *direct Subjection* to the imposition, and a practical Encouragement and strengthening of the imposing Power. Compliance is the very greatest Encouragement an imposing Power can meet with, and the most effectual way of betraying Liberty; and our Advisers are leading us directly into the Sin, both by their Advice and Example, and by the Reasons of both; which are the very Reasons upon which the Imposers found their exorbitant claim of Power, and from which they pretend to support it.

Thirdly, WHEN Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, St. Paul gives us a remarkable History of his Reprehension of the Apostle Peter in these words, (Gal. ii. 11--14.) *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face; because he was to be blamed, for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the Circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their Dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, thou compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews.* These words seem to be Decisive of the present Debate: For, Peter's fault was in not

holding Communion with the Gentiles as
 eely after that certain came from James,
 he did before ; tho' he had no Scruples
 against it on his own Account, and was warn'd
 a Vision from Heaven to call nothing
 common or unclean ; Yet he withdrew and se-
 arated himself. It appears that he did this
 voluntarily, and without any Church-canon
 Rule binding him to it ; and he might
 have defended himself against St. Paul's reproof
 by the very same Arguments, by which our
 advisers defend their Advice and conduct ;
 he might have said, " These are poor weak
 Jews, who insist, I confess, unwarrantably
 upon these Terms of Communion with the
 Gentiles ; but it is owing to their Weakness
 that they insist upon such narrow Terms ;
 and I can't help it now, but out of pru-
 dence and Charity to their Souls, lest I
 shou'd offend and stumble them, and mar
 their Edification, and destroy my own ca-
 pacity of Usefulness to them, which I
 ought by all means to preserve, it being
 my Province to be in a special manner
 the Apostle of the Circumcision, I must
 in the mean time abstain from Communi-
 on with the Gentiles, until matters come
 to a better Settlement, and the poor weak
 Jews come to more Understanding and
 Temper. " I am satisfy'd all this cou'd
 have been said by St. Peter in Defence of
 his Practice, and urg'd with far greater
 strength or colour of Reason, than it can
 be pleaded by our Advisers, or by the most
 eminent Minister amongst us all ; and the

Text says that he separated, *fearing* the which were of the Circumcision, which *Henry* on the place expounds thus, he grew more shy of the Gentiles only to humour them the Circumcision, and for Fear of giving 'em offence. But cou'd any of these Pretences Christian Prudence, Charity, Forbearance, diffidation, and Fear of Offence have justify his Conduct; *St. Paul*, certainly wou'd not have found Fault with him, he wou'd not have reprehended him so sharply, nor withstood him so openly: And why shou'd the same Pretences be set up now for a Practice exactly parallel, (as far as it's necessary shou'd be, to make out my Argument,) when the same Pretences set in a much stronger Light were not sufficient to protect an Apostle from a just and open Reproof. But the Truth is, tho' the Apostle *Paul* bore with the Weakness of Christians with as tender a Compassion as any Man ever did, yet no Instance can be given where ever he gave the least Encouragement to the Imposition of their mistaken Judgments upon their Fellow Christians, no, nor to the Imposition of some certain Truths, as necessary Terms of Communion, where the contrary Errors were consistent with sincere Piety; such Imposition he always resisted, and reprov'd those who encourag'd them; which was *St. Peter's* fault and had such an influence on the imposing Spirit, as he is said to *compel the Gentiles* which he did no otherwise than by his own bad Example, and by his not being open and frank enough in undeceiving the Jews

Jews ; which, together with his Non-communion with the Gentiles, encouraged the Jews to grow in their Demands and Encroachments on the Liberties of their Fellow-christians ; and therefore he and all that were influenced by his conduct are said *not to walk uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel* ; and such was the influence of a bad Example from a Man of his Note and Figure, that the other Jews Dissembled likewise with him ; and *Barnabas* also was carried away with their Dissimulation. It is high time then, for all Peaceable and Godly Divines and knowing Christians that are amongst us, to imitate *St. Paul* in the noble Stand he made for Gospel Truth and Liberty ; (but they ought to do it in the same manner, by fair Arguments and convincing Evidence from the Holy Scripture) ; and not by a cowardly Silence and unjust fear of Offending, fall into the fault of *St. Peter* ; and like him draw away others into the like offensive Practices, which too many are disposed to go into, from an undue deference to those who have shown them the way.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 37, Line 9, for *the*, r. *these*. p. 42, l. 14, for *enquires* r. *Inquiries*. p. 45, l. 14. after *know* add, *the*. p. 59, l. 32. for *forget*, r. *forgo*. p. 64, l. ult. for *that* r. *the*.

Jews; which, together with his Non-com-
 munion with the Gentiles, encouraged the
 Jews to grow in their Bitterness and En-
 vouchments on the Israelites of their Pe-
 low-christians; and therefore he and all that
 were influenced by his conduct are said not
 to have sought anything to the credit of the
 Gospel; and that was the influence of a bad
 example from a Son of his Love and Fi-
 delity, that the other Jews distinguished like-
 wise with him; and Balaam also was cri-
 tised away with their Discrimination. It is
 high time then, for all reasonable and
 Godly Divines and knowing Christians that
 are amongst us, to imitate St. Paul in the
 noble stand he made for Gospel Truth and
 Liberty; (that they ought to do it in the
 same manner, by fair Arguments and con-
 vincing Evidence from the Holy Scripture);
 and not by a cowardly Silence and unjust
 fear of Offending, fall into the snare of St.
 Paul; and like him draw away others into
 the like offensive courses, which too many
 are disposed to do, and are under obli-
 gation to do, to show them the



THE JEWISH QUESTION

ERRATA

For the word "Jews" in the first line of the first page, read "Israelites".
 For the word "Gentiles" in the second line of the first page, read "Gentiles".
 For the word "Bitterness" in the third line of the first page, read "Bitterness".
 For the word "En- vouchments" in the fourth line of the first page, read "En- vouchments".
 For the word "Israelites" in the fifth line of the first page, read "Israelites".
 For the word "Pe- low-christians" in the sixth line of the first page, read "Pe- low-christians".
 For the word "and all that" in the seventh line of the first page, read "and all that".
 For the word "were influenced" in the eighth line of the first page, read "were influenced".
 For the word "are said not" in the ninth line of the first page, read "are said not".
 For the word "to have sought" in the tenth line of the first page, read "to have sought".
 For the word "anything to the credit" in the eleventh line of the first page, read "anything to the credit".
 For the word "of the Gospel" in the twelfth line of the first page, read "of the Gospel".
 For the word "and that was the influence" in the thirteenth line of the first page, read "and that was the influence".
 For the word "of a bad example" in the fourteenth line of the first page, read "of a bad example".
 For the word "from a Son of his Love and Fi- delity" in the fifteenth line of the first page, read "from a Son of his Love and Fi- delity".
 For the word "that the other Jews distinguished like- wise with him" in the sixteenth line of the first page, read "that the other Jews distinguished like- wise with him".
 For the word "and Balaam also was cri- tised away with their Discrimination" in the seventeenth line of the first page, read "and Balaam also was cri- tised away with their Discrimination".
 For the word "It is high time then, for all reasonable and Godly Divines and knowing Christians that are amongst us, to imitate St. Paul in the noble stand he made for Gospel Truth and Liberty;" in the eighteenth line of the first page, read "It is high time then, for all reasonable and Godly Divines and knowing Christians that are amongst us, to imitate St. Paul in the noble stand he made for Gospel Truth and Liberty;".
 For the word "(that they ought to do it in the same manner, by fair Arguments and convincing Evidence from the Holy Scripture);" in the nineteenth line of the first page, read "(that they ought to do it in the same manner, by fair Arguments and convincing Evidence from the Holy Scripture);".
 For the word "and not by a cowardly Silence and unjust fear of Offending, fall into the snare of St. Paul;" in the twentieth line of the first page, read "and not by a cowardly Silence and unjust fear of Offending, fall into the snare of St. Paul;".
 For the word "and like him draw away others into the like offensive courses, which too many are disposed to do, and are under obli- gation to do, to show them the" in the twenty-first line of the first page, read "and like him draw away others into the like offensive courses, which too many are disposed to do, and are under obli- gation to do, to show them the".